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THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

BY
JOHN FLEMING WILSON
Author of "The Man Who Came Back," etc., etc.

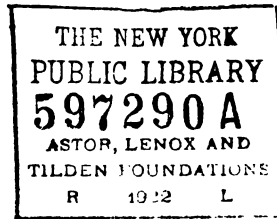
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I FAREWELLS	3
II A JOURNEY	11
III MYSTERIOUS HARDING	22
IV NO PLACE FOR A GIRL	30
V ON THE SPINDTHRIFT	34
VI "HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED"	41
VII THE OTHER WOMAN	48
VIII A PRINCELY GIFT	57
IX THE REEF	65
X A BUSINESS PROPOSITION	76
XI SERGEANT YAMA	82
XII PLANS FOR HAPPINESS	88
XIII MRS. MALLEW'S SECRET	98
XIV AN UNDERSTANDING	108
XV THE BEAUTY-BUREAUX	116
XVI SORRY VALLEY	123
XVII RULES AND REGULATIONS	133
XVIII THE QUESTION OF POVERTY	140
XIX HARDING LOSES HIS JOB	152
XX "I SHALL WAIT"	161
XXI WHAT SANDERSON NEEDED	173
XXII TO FEED THE CAPTIVE	183
XXIII THE SHADOW	196
XXIV WILLIAMS IS ROUGHLY HANDLED	206
XXV IN PERIL	220
XXVI PLANNING A COUP D'ÉTAT	231
XXVII TOWER'S RETURN	240
XXVIII DYNAMITE	263
XXIX "WHY DIDN'T YOU TRUST HIM?"	272
XXX THE CANDLE BURNS LOW	288
XXXI "BY WAY OF MR. HARROW'S"	296

THE
PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

CHAPTER I

FAREWELLS

THE station platform at Bryn Mawr was quite empty when Moira Sanderson stepped upon it after a brisk walk from the campus. She set down her two suit-cases, drew the wrinkles out of her gloves and looked about for the baggage-man. He came, quickly enough, cap in hand, and her query whether her trunks had arrived from Dalgelly Hall was met with the assurance that they now reposed on a truck, ready for the express for Philadelphia.

"You are leaving us for good?" said the official respectfully.

"For good, Reynolds," she answered, glancing back at the college towers.

They both sighed, the grizzled baggage-man as though over a departing child; the girl with a mingling of sadness and relief.

"Home, miss?" he suggested.

Moira looked him frankly in the eyes, a habit of hers. "Is it home when it's nine thousand miles away and I haven't seen it in ten years?"

"I live just six blocks away — well!" He took

4 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

off his cap again and gave the problem up, as though the proportion between six blocks and nine thousand miles were outside his mental arithmetic. Moira laughed, thereby uniting forever in the man's mind the sum of nine thousand and a touchingly beautiful young woman.

"I shall think of you," he remarked gently, covered himself and departed about his duties.

"So shall I!" said a carefully tuned voice at her side.

She turned gracefully to catch the warmly admiring glance of a gentleman who had just come up.

"Why, Professor Blakestone! I was sure I wasn't going to have the chance of bidding you good-bye," she said.

"I thought you were gone, with the rest of the June graduates," he explained. "I was just passing when I saw that it was really you."

She held out her hand generously. "And I must thank you for all you have taught me, professor. After all the fuss and bother were over I stayed on for a few days just to get my mind settled about the four years here, before I started off for — for home."

Blakestone made a slight deprecatory gesture. "I'm afraid I didn't do as much as I might have."

Her brown eyes met his thoughtfully. "I don't know," she replied. "We study so much piffle here, one doesn't get the real perspective.— Now I've said the wrong thing! Only, I wanted you to be sure that I was at least going to try out the things you told us about in your practical philosophy course."

The professor winced, but his tone gave no indi-

cation of his sudden soreness of feeling. "I tried to point out to you" — a gentle emphasis on the "you" caught her ear — "that each of us has to find his own happiness, our *summum bonum*, as best one can with regard to universal laws. I hope you are going to find great happiness, Miss Sanderson; and if anything I ever said helps you, if you can say at some future time, 'He spoke the truth,' I'll have my reward."

A station platform was not the place he would have chosen for this parting. Shy, studious and oppressed with the formal atmosphere of a woman's college, he had been aware for two years of the presence in his lecture-room of a girl of unusual earnestness and striking charm. He had noted her grace, her womanly poise, her shining eyes, her mobile mouth, the peculiar intensity of her moods, which varied from the aerial gaiety of a child to the almost morbid introspection of an ardent woman. Time and again she had tasked him with questions which made him chafe under the restrictions that guarded his teaching. He had longed to make their relation personal. But this loveliness was departing from him, and all he found to say was a last word: "Don't go too deeply in your search for happiness."

The train whistled up the line, and she held out her hand again. "Not even for others?"

"I was thinking of yourself," he murmured.

"That's against all your own philosophy," she said with a smile.

"Women really are outside philosophy," he said curtly, as he helped her up the steps with her suit-cases.

6 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

From the open window she looked down on him, feeling secure for a final gust of appreciation. "I shall always try to remember and put your teaching into practice. You don't know how much I'm going to rely on you!"

He lifted his hat with a flourish. "If it weren't for such as you, we men would need little philosophy, Miss Sanderson." His laugh covered the suggestion his words held, and she was able to smile her loveliest with a clear conscience. The train moved swiftly out and left the professor standing on the long platform, like an emblem of four years passed into the preterite.

At Haverford Moira watched a group of solemn youths climb aboard, and she wondered how far the most homeless one — she felt homeless herself — would have to travel before he arrived at his ultimate destination. The moment became suddenly impressive. Here were a score of souls leaving the protection of walls and instructors for the open world. "All searching for happiness!" she said to herself. She glowed superbly at the thought.

Broad Street Station swallowed the train with a hungry roar, she went with the stream of people up the platform and through the wide gate into the warm, odorous thoroughfare. An enormous voice within bellowed *Bryn Mawr*, and she felt her complete separation from her old life; she would never hasten her steps at sound of that call again.

She went to the window and bought her transportation for San Francisco, trying to fix in her mind the agent's directions as to what she should do when she reached Chicago. Having three hours to wait,

she elected to spend them in the station, and proceeded to the restaurant to satisfy a hearty appetite. Over a final cup of black tea she reread two letters, which she had folded double in the envelope and tucked into her handbag. The first was from her chum, Mary Foster. It ran:

June the fourteenth.

Moirá Dear!

Why didn't you come and spend a last week with us here in Virginia? No need to ask, I suppose. You are simply crazy to get back to your beloved niggers in Atui Island and make them shining examples of what a college trained sociologist can do.

Papa laughs at me when I talk about what Professor Blakestone says about finding happiness in making others happy, "The Will to Live," and all that. Brother has the nerve to insinuate that the most a girl can do is to make one man happy. Pig! But then we have no chance down here to experiment. Papa says too much of that sort of thing has been done already. He was horribly persnicketty about my wanting to study the conditions in our county and try to formulate a remedy.

Felix came over the very first evening. He asked most particularly for you. When I told him you had gone to the South Seas to convert your father's niggers he went outside and swore. At least he looked as if he had been swearing when he came in.

I can never forgive myself for not spending those last days after graduation with you. But mamma's heart was set on giving me a ball and she had already fixed the date and—you know, I *had* to leave you. . . .

I wonder what your father will think of you? What

8 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

will you think of him, after all these years? One's mother, of course, would be different. They never change. But to meet a man—a father I hadn't seen since I was a mere child—my dear! what will you do! . . . I envy you the trip through those darling seas and islands . . .

The rest of the letter went unread. Moira unfolded the long, narrow envelope that held her father's last communication. She drew out the much wrinkled enclosure and smoothed it out.

Atui I. via Suva, Fiji Islands.

3d April.

Dear daughter Moira—

Howard in S. F. will send you a draft for £330 which will pay your expenses and passage home. I will see that Capt. Randall looks after your baggage on arrival of SS *Maitai* August 22nd. If you don't like it here you can then follow my original plan for you to travel two years in Europe with some lady to look after you. Of course I shall be very glad to see you, but do not think you will like it here as there is no society in Atui for an educated girl like you and your mother feared to have you come back. You must make the best of it. I have had electric lights installed over the city and a new pier built. Robbed both times as usual. Your notion of my meeting you in Honolulu is ridiculous. I take my trip to Sidney every two years and that is enough.

Yr aff. father

THOS. SANDERSON.

She allowed herself a few minutes' meditation on Atui and her father. The city, a mere conglomeration of cracked streets and fantastic houses about

the circular harbour rose plainly before her mind's eye. She seemed to feel for an instant the warm breath of the wind, smell the salt scent of the surf in the Pass and the oily reek of the copra sheds; she heard the chant of the dark-skinned workmen over their tasks. Then she brought close the image of her father; a tall, gnarled man whose brown hands and lean mahogany face were set off by stiff white cotton suit. She heard his thin, indifferent voice and — she caught the waiter's eye and dipped into her purse.

Before she quit the table she assured herself of the safety of her tickets, her money and a memorandum of things to be done in San Francisco preparatory to embarking on the steamer for the South Pacific Ocean. Satisfied, she went out of the dining room like one who is ready to breast the waves of an unknown sea. She was enormously excited, yet she was consciously methodical, as she had always been. She had confidence, not so much in the future as in herself. She would carry into a new, untried and alien world the steadiness and good habits learned during a long period of subjection to formal rules and conventions. She would have stoutly denied that she was not perfectly imaginative, but she took pride in being what she called "practical," which was the twin of "honesty" in her catalogue of the chief virtues. She had a contempt for mere sentiment, with the grosser forms of which her beauty had sometimes brought her acquainted, and she hated deceit in every form. So now she faced a long and romantic journey without abating a jot of her ordinary poise and avowed to herself that she would

10 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

meet any contingency in this novel world on the precise and level plane of fact; and whatever the strain on her will-power, she was going to see the truth and acknowledge nothing but it.

She left Broad Street Station for a South Sea island consciously equipped with a passion for practical sociology, a single heart and a stern determination to worship honesty in word and thought and deed.

CHAPTER II

A JOURNEY

THE express slipped by *Bryn Mawr*, giving only glimpses of grey towers above the trees, and Moira settled back in her soft seat and dreamily watched the swaying brass chains on the lamp above her. For the first time in many days she allowed nerves and muscles to relax. She no longer had to exert herself, to think out each next hour. The brains and skill of others had planned and executed a machine which was taking her from a strenuous and laborious life at the rate of many miles an hour; and the enormous, smooth strength of the invisible engine seemed like the silken compulsion of comfortable destiny.

The thoughts of twenty-two, once released from the bondage of hours, places and duties, fly swiftly, like flights of plover, coming suddenly, circling, vanishing in obedience to obscure impulses. Moira did not attempt to discern what was her chief idea, but allowed them all to flit and hover as they would. She thought of the elevation of Atui, the sweet scent of the hibiscus, the sounding surf on the beach, her mother's grave on the high hill, the tuneful call of her old nurse at evening, the brown face of her father.

Till dusk she dreamed thus, forgetful of dinner

12 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

and the miles spinning behind her. Then a sudden word, like the firing of a gun, sent her pretty thoughts flying. She wakened to hear the word repeated: *Felicity*.

She arranged her hair with a few swift touches, felt her collar, brushed her skirt down and looked along the lit aisle of the car. She caught the sheen of a grey head two seats away. And old, veined hand lay on the plush arm of the seat and the same voice she had just heard was raised in emphatic protest.

"Bosh! We aren't seeking happiness now. Happiness can't be solitary any more than sunshine; it comes to a community, to several people. It takes several people to obtain it, if you like to put it that way, and to keep it. What everybody is looking for now is felicity, the pleasure one can get for and by one's self. Altruism? A mere word! The idea has vanished. Charity? Fiddlesticks! Keep to your facts. From the child playing with his hobby-horse to the millionaire with his universities we are all trying to find a way to be contented by ourselves."

Another voice interposed. "You think that no man can be happy alone?"

"Happiness is a reflection upon us from the outside," was the reply. "Very easily got, too, if the world were only aware of it. But for untold centuries we've been trying each one of us to have everything to ourselves and we've abandoned the possible for the impossible — Possible happiness for impossible felicity!"

Moirá Sanderson listened no longer. Her brown eyes were seeing the lecture-room and Professor

Blakestone by the reading-desk, enunciating in measured tones the secret of man's will to live. He had called the goal of human endeavour and strife and energy "Felicity." In his volume, considered by his students to be an epitome of the maturest thought on life's problems, he had expounded the rules by which this Great Object might be attained. She, Moira Sanderson, was travelling nine thousand miles to put Blakestone's doctrine into practice. But an unknown old man, hidden behind the high back of a Pullman seat, was announcing that Felicity was a dream; that Happiness, by no means its perfect synonym, could be attained yet only by reflection from others.

Who was right? She determined to make sure. Confronted with the problem, she felt the vitality of her youth and pitied the feebleness of age which refused to grapple and was merely querulous.

Before she landed in San Francisco she had satisfied herself. Blakestone's "felicity" and the old man's "happiness" were one and the same. The professor recognised no difference. There was a shade of meaning in felicity which was not in the word "happiness." She cherished this as a new, precious fact. It simplified things to be able to call unattainable bliss "felicity" as opposed to its practical sister "happiness." But fundamentally both Blakestone and the unknown speaker were in accord. And her earnest consideration of the problem thus freshly presented brought the whole idea out of dim mental recesses and into the sunshine. In a word, the wise woman insisted on making others happy, not because she unselfishly loved them, but because

14 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

it was a social necessity, like sanitation and pure milk.

This delightfully settled, she faced the problem of ways and means. Here she was at no loss. She was without illusions, she knew, as to the things needful for her own contentment; and, of course, other women were like her.

"There is more misery over bad complexions than over broken hearts," she soliloquised. "More women cry over an ill-fitting gown than over an erring husband. If I made an honest choice between being bald and virtuous and splendid-haired and wicked, I'd keep my hair. Pretty hats, becoming dress and good health with a dash of style would cure half the real sorrow in the world."

So she planned exactly what she was going to do when she arrived in Atui, and in her handbag was a list of articles she would buy before the steamer sailed. It grew steadily longer.

"Cold cream and hair tonic mightn't appeal to Professor Blakestone," she wrote to Mary Foster; "but I'm going at this honestly. Atui, as I remember it, was filled with poorly dressed, sallow-skinned, thin-haired women. Of course they were miserable and made everybody around them unhappy. The logic of the thing is absurdly simple: beautify your woman and she feels attractive and sure of herself. On the spot she commences to radiate happiness. I'm sure I'm right. I have a strong suspicion that men are the same. The lowest criminal puts on a clean shirt to be hanged in."

She had three days in San Francisco before the sailing of the *Maitai*, and as soon as she was es-

tablished in an hotel, she called upon Artemus Howard, for many years her father's trusted agent. He affected not to believe that she was she.

"Do you mean to tell me you're the little Moira Sanderson I welcomed a dozen years ago?" he demanded, giving her a chair in his private office.

"I was a homely little thing, wasn't I?" she murmured.

"You were very unhappy and homesick," he responded, with an air of having just patted her cheek.

"I was unhappy because I knew I wasn't a bit attractive," she answered.

"Then you must be very blissful now," Howard chuckled. "Really, Miss Moira! Dear, dear! Well, I'm an old man! Brown hair like your mother's! Style! Beauty! Miss Moira, I'm at your feet!"

"Nonsense!" she smiled back at him. "You were awfully dear to a poor motherless little girl, and you're just trying to be nice again when she's grown up. I'm on my way back to Atui."

"So your father informed me," Howard remarked, coughing slightly. "Much against his wishes, Miss Moira."

"Oh, but I've finished college, and my father needs me now," was the serene response.

"Ahem! Undoubtedly," Howard assented, gravely. "However, have you fully considered what Atui is like? Is it the place for a young, highly educated girl? Really, now, do you think so?"

"I remember exactly what Atui is like," she said

16 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

with equal gravity. "It is the place my mother died — the wretchedest spot on earth!"

Howard was startled and bent a scrutinising glance on his visitor. She returned it frankly. His fingers drummed on the desk-top. "The wretchedest spot on earth!" he repeated in an astonished voice. "Really, Miss Moira — indeed — well, well! Wretchedest spot on earth! Hah!"

"Oh, I know all about it," Moira went on. "I was little, I know; but I used to hear lots that nobody ever suspected, and I used to cry because I couldn't mend things." She was silent a moment, eyes fixed on that distant prospect. Mr. Howard stared at the desk-pad.

She resumed more brightly, "But now I can help things!"

He threw her a comical glance of despair. "Of course, of course! You're bound and determined to go. It's none of my affair, but —"

She caught him up with another "But?"

"Things have changed, Miss Moira."

"For the worse?" she asked quickly.

"I didn't say that," he interposed. "Financially, affairs are in admirable shape. Your father is amazingly prosperous. Atui, I understand, has grown immensely. Quite a city! Electric lights, paved streets, new pier, band-music and so on. Your father now has control of several other islands, as well. He's governor, under an international agreement. Hum!"

"Such changes are for the better," was the firm response. "Anything that will make a place more comfortable and cleaner is for the better."

"Certainly," the agent acquiesced. "I may say that Atui is much improved since you knew it.—Wretchedest spot on earth! Very strong language, Miss Moira."

With girlish grace she put an elbow on each knee and dropped her round chin into her palms, looking at the old man with clear eyes. "Now don't tell me you don't know it," she said quietly. "Why I've seen —"

Howard laid a thin white hand on her arm. "What's the use? Let bygones be bygones, Miss Moira. Remember that the civilising of a barbarous land is no joke."

"Civilising!" she echoed.

Howard gave the discussion over with a resigned gesture. "My plain advice to you is not to go down there," he told her bluntly. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-two."

"Your mother was twenty-five when she married the 'King of Atui,'" the agent remarked austerely. "A lovely woman, Miss Moira! I beg you to stay here. Let me urge you to stay here a while — guest of my wife and myself — enjoy your youth. Your mother died in Atui."

Soft eyes met his hard ones. "If she had lived, Atui would never have been so bad," she murmured.

Howard grunted, turned over papers, thrummed on the desk, stared out the window and finally said, "I have no daughter. Mrs. Howard and I would be delighted. We'd really be most happy to have you —"

She rose and kissed him on the forehead. "You always were a dear," she said, smiling down on

18 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

him. "But papa needs me. Think of him all these years with no woman in the house!"

The agent jumped up and took both her hands in his. "I do wish you would stop with us — just for a few months!"

"I've already booked my passage on the *Maitai*," she replied.

"I'll cancel it instantly," he said, reaching for the telephone.

"No, I'm going," she responded. "Please don't tease any more. I want you to do something for me."

He saw the determination in her face and bowed. "Command me."

Moira seated herself again and opened her handbag. "I have a perfectly terrible list of things I must take with me, and I don't think I'll have money enough to buy them all."

"How much will you need?" he asked in his business tone.

"I don't know," she answered, wrinkling her brows over her list. "I thought maybe you would advise me."

Mr. Howard put on his eyeglasses and peered at the memorandum written in Moira's clear, regular hand. At first it elicited merely a few polite ahems and hums. But when he looked up he eyed her curiously.

"There are very good shops in Atui," he remarked.

She made a pretty grimace. "I know those shops! Trade-goods made to cheat the natives!"

"Really, Miss Moira!"

"Really, they are! I won't have such truck as that."

"But in Sydney? Your father will get you anything you wish there."

"Do you think he would allow his dirty schooner captain to spend two days picking out those articles, one by one; now do you, Mr. Howard?" She smiled coaxingly.

"I suppose it would be more satisfactory for you to do your own shopping," he admitted. "But I haven't the faintest notion how much all these will cost. Shall I give you a thousand dollars? Eh?"

"Too much," was the prompt reply. "Father wouldn't like it."

Howard chuckled. "Of course I trust you to explain where the money went to." Their eyes met in humorous understanding of Thomas Sanderson's peculiar methods of making up his accounts.

"Let me have five hundred," Moira finally said. "That will have to do. Now where shall I go to purchase these things to the best advantage?"

He directed her carefully, offering a clerk as guide. She refused any assistance, but promised that she would telephone if she was at a loss. Then she signed the draft for the money and accepted an invitation for the evening. As she was leaving, Howard stopped her for a moment with a quizzical, "Do you mean to tell me that you use all those aids to beauty at your age?"

She blushed rosily. "No, they are for others — a little scheme of mine."

They shook hands over his chuckle.

After dinner that night Mrs. Howard used her

20 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

powers of persuasion to keep Moira from proceeding to Atui. "After all," sighed the old lady, "it can't be any place for a girl with your advantages. Stay with us, my dear. Think of the young men who will be at your feet!"

"I have no use for young men who can't stand up," was the pert answer.

"Well," came the conclusion from Mrs. Howard's lips, "if you will go, remember that you can always come back here and live with Artemus and me. Now let's go down and talk to him."

Howard received them genially in his study. A slight lifting of his wife's eyebrows shunted him away from the now forbidden topic of Moira's not going on to her father's island. He seated her in an easy chair and inquired whether she had made all her intended purchases. Upon her reply that she had he went on, half maliciously, to ask for what purpose she needed them. Blushes showed that the subject was delicate and he forebore. In the doorway she made a single explanatory remark:

"Don't think I've wasted all that money! I learned a lot in college. Come down and see Atui when I've finished with it."

The door closed on her, and Howard looked at his wife. She shook her head. "Poor, dear, lovely girl!"

"The stories we hear may be exaggerated," Howard said, much disturbed. "After all, Sanderson is a fairly decent sort, and he's allowing her to come down there, and that looks as if he intended to — as if there might be a change."

His wife shook her head. "She's going right

into the lion's mouth. That woman will never give up!"

"Come, come!" said Howard. "Sanderson is no fool. He's always treated Moira right. She's his daughter, after all."

"Atui killed her mother," Mrs. Howard murmured.

"Atui won't kill Moira. Unless I'm greatly mistaken, Atui, Sanderson and the too-well-known fair lady will find her a tartar."

Mrs. Howard audibly hoped so.

CHAPTER III

MYSTERIOUS HARDING

THE sagacious purser of the *Maitai* needed but a glance at Miss Sanderson to assure him that her proper place was at the captain's left hand at table. He promptly got her ticket from her and made her understand that everything she wished was at her command. Later, reading her name on the passenger-list, he let out a low whistle indicative of amazement. He went carefully over the freight-bills, until he found the marks and destination of her luggage and then, assured of the truth of his surmise, grew wrathful.

"The old hound!" he muttered to himself. "To think of a pirate like that having a daughter and allowing her to go back to Atui! and such a girl, too!"

That night he abandoned his office to the freight-clerk and made haste to acquaint himself with her. She welcomed him frankly, and when he mentioned a visit to Atui, immediately put him through an examination that brought the perspiration to his forehead.

"To tell the truth, I know very little about the place," he affirmed at last, in desperation.

"But you must know Captain Randall," she protested.

"Oh, yes, Randall. Skipper of your father's schooner. Rough character, Randall."

"He was always good to me," she said severely. "Of course, I'd have liked him better if he'd washed his hands and face."

"Washing isn't the fashion in Atui," the purser said incautiously.

Moira stared at him. He stumbled on: "Honestly, Miss Sanderson, I can't see what attraction Atui has for you."

"I presume it's because it's my home," she remarked coldly. Then she relented. "It is a kind of horrid place, isn't it?"

"No place for you, I should say."

"As you don't have to live there, I don't see why you look so injured. Good night!" He departed, frozen.

"I fail to see why everybody thinks Atui so awful," she thought. "I was unhappy there, but that was because mamma died and I was sorry for the poor natives having to work so hard. Now, first Mr. Howard and then this purser talk as if—" She gave it up.

The next day the nor'wester which roars across the northerly stretches of the Pacific for months at a time swept the *Maitai's* decks clear of all but the hardiest among the passengers. Moira found both wind and crisp sea exhilarating, and duly rejoiced in the emptiness of the promenades. She walked steadily through the hours from breakfast to luncheon, delighted the captain's heart by an appetite equal to salt-beef and cabbage, and resumed her exercise under a bright afternoon sun.

24 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

During her morning walk a young man of rather sedate demeanour had taken evident care not to trespass on her side of the deck. This afternoon she observed that he was still taking the air, but quietly avoiding the few passengers who were visible. He seemed so resolved to keep solitary that she felt curious to know who and what he was. Since she had grown up she had seen few men of his stamp. Her masculine acquaintances had whole-heartedly belonged in crowds; they had been briskly social; she could not fancy them enjoying and cherishing solitude. So she studied him as a new specimen.

She found him not less than manly. His figure was strong and trim. A sinewy neck was displayed by his loose collar. His face, faintly lined, was firm-fleshed; a somewhat stern mouth gave an impression of resolute will. The eyes, gray and cold, seemed oddly at variance with his close-clipped, thick brown hair.

The purser coming along with his hands full of papers stopped to answer her careless question.

"First-class passenger for Samoa. Some sort of architect or engineer," he informed her. "Anyway, his room is filled with drawings and things. Never a word to say."

"Oh!" Moira returned quietly, and passed on.

The next morning the decks were comfortably filled, and Moira was forced to confine her strolls within the limits made by steamer-chairs, the cricket-netting and the shuffle-board players. So, after a brief trial of walking, she subsided into her own chair with a book. She was displeased to observe that the next chair was occupied by the unknown young man.

However, he apparently had no intention of availing himself of steamer privileges and did not address her. He was not reading, but sat with his eyes fixed on the sea, as if his thoughts were far away. She heard him politely refuse to buy a ticket for the Calcutta Sweep on the day's run, and when she attended the auction at eleven o'clock she was aware that he was not among the crowd.

For two days her neighbour paid no attention to her. "Very likely he is in love with some girl," she decided wisely. "That makes it nice for me. I can trust him not to be bothersome."

By bothersome she meant that he did not act as did the other men on the *Maitai* who, young and old, insisted on her either walking or playing shuffle-board or looking at the stars or investing in tickets for the Sweep. At first she took a small part in these dull festivities, but quickly found them not to her liking and resumed her place by the silent unknown whence even the purser's entreaties could not drag her.

It is impossible to be near another person for long hours daily, within arm's reach, and not become in some fashion acquainted with him. By the end of the fifth day Moira found, to her astonishment, that she knew her companion's habits of smoking, eating and drinking. Twice in the morning he would leave his seat and return smelling of tobacco. He smoked three times during the long afternoon. He went late to meals and came back late. He drank very seldom. He shaved daily. He changed his clothes at noon. He used castile soap. He never looked at his watch. He never opened a book.

Such was the catalogue she unconsciously made —

26 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

to her blushing amazement when she realised what she had done. Then followed the thought: Does he know as much about me?

In maidenly shame she ordered the deck steward to change her chair to another part of the ship. But the thought persisted that this unknown person, this man whose voice she had never heard, was the single individual on the *Maitai* who had any direct knowledge of her. And to resent this was not to alter the situation. Furthermore, she could not even speak of it, nor indicate in any way that she disliked this silent, unobtrusive familiarity. A gentleman would at least have read a book!

The ship reached Honolulu the sixth day, and its passengers were soon dispersed over that playground of the Pacific. When the last one was ashore Moira drew a long breath. The day was her own. She went to her room and disinterred Professor Blake-stone's volume on "The Will to Live" from her trunk. She felt that solitude would be blest by a fuller preparation for the work she was to do in Atui. Resolutely she put aside thoughts of a surf-ride, the loveliness of King's Road — remembered from childhood, the fascinating colour and clamour of the lower town. As she ascended to the upper deck she felt superior to the uninspired and aimless sightseer.

The awnings were down and her chair stood in the hot sun. She went around to the other side of the ship where the shadow held some coolness and sank into the first chair. She had her book open on her lap when she realised that the unknown young man sat in the next seat. She was greatly provoked. How could she study "The Will to Live" in the pres-

ence of a man already acquainted with too many of her personal habits? She would at least keep sacred her mind and *its* habits. She slammed the volume to.

"Am I disturbing you?" asked a quiet voice.

She hesitated the moment which gives assent. The unknown rose, without an expression of apology or resentment, and bowed. She spoke to him impulsively.

"Don't move. I merely thought I was alone."

"I didn't go ashore with the rest because I like a little solitude myself," he answered politely.

"Not even a book?" She regretted the words as soon as spoken. They made it plain that she had observed him closely.

"Not even a book, Miss Sanderson."

She flushed. He saw the betraying colour and stepped back. "I beg your pardon for calling you by name. I overheard several call you that. My own name is Harding, Harry Harding."

Thus he threw himself on her mercy. She took graceful advantage of the moment to glance at him as if she had never seen him before. He stood the scrutiny well. She smiled. "You may sit down, Mr. Harding."

In the most matter-of-fact way he seated himself and resumed his stare out over the sparkling bay. In that swift self-absorption there was no hint of discourtesy. She was piqued. The pages of "The Will to Live" had lost interest. They needed the grey college towers for a background, the sound of the hourly bell, of hurrying feet down long passageways. After all, what did Professor Blakestone

28 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

know about living? About life? She felt for the first time a novel sense in the words *to live*. How many meanings had it? Beside her sat a man who evidently followed an ideal of his own, possibly so completely different from all other notions of living that it was unique. What lay behind his incessant thought? Impulsively she turned to him, holding up the book so that he could see the title.

He glanced at it politely and raised his eyes to hers. "I've read it."

"Then you are a college man?" she said more cordially.

He evaded her. "People outside universities are interested in such things," he said. "Blakestone's all right — for a college professor."

She was up in arms, loyalty aflame. "He's an authority!"

A grimy stoker went by in undershirt and sooty canvas trousers. He indicated the figure by a slight gesture. "What would Blakestone say to him?"

The dropping of the respectful title jarred. "The professor looks forward, not backward," she murmured.

Harding allowed himself a polite smile. "That stoker is the present, like us all."

She felt convicted of priggish insincerity. "I mean that Professor Blakestone plans for the future. One can't change the present. One must deal with the future."

"The stoker, then, has no future, in your opinion," he said almost crossly. "Only a continuation of his rather dirty present."

"I — you — I have a future," she said, half to herself.

"In Atui?" he suggested.

She was startled. Her brown eyes shone angrily.

"May I ask how you know I'm going there?" she demanded.

"Am I blind and deaf?" he retorted. "You are heralded all over the ship as Miss Moira Sanderson, the daughter of 'King' Thomas Sanderson of Atui, the wealthiest trader in the South Seas."

She rose. "You have entirely the advantage of me. I have no knowledge of who you are."

He got to his feet politely. "I? I'm plain Harry Harding, civil engineer of — well, without any further description just at present, Miss Sanderson."

She smiled, still wrathful. "Atui used to be filled with men, well, without any description 'just at present,' as you put it."

"You will redeem it, I hope," he answered steadily enough.

CHAPTER IV.

NO PLACE FOR A GIRL

HARDING was not offended at the sharp words he had drawn upon himself. In other women such a sudden assumption of superiority would have been vastly irritating. Miss Sanderson's snub invited him to further acquaintance. He had been thoughtless in his light scorn of Blakestone. She had offered him the subject in a friendly manner, to ease over an awkward moment, and he had pounced on it with inexcusable viciousness.

"That's the way I do things!" he said to himself. "A girl gives me a chance to get acquainted and I tear the first little offering to shreds. I might as well have stepped on her gown and ripped it. And she's intelligent, too, in spite of her good looks."

He became more and more concerned about the effect of his awkwardness, as men who have had little room for women in their lives do, when they realise their deficiencies. In five years he had had no woman friend, nor wanted any. A brief and painful six months' passion had put an end to his first lively interest in the sex. The wound had healed, but its scar remained, a reminder of folly he was in no mind to repeat.

Sentiment had nothing to do with the present occasion: a lady had tried to be civil and he had rather rudely checked her gentle advances — acted the boor,

in fact, he told himself. He did not wish to be thought unmannerly, and his very indifference to women in general made it a point of honour to be respectful to individuals. Very likely she cared nothing for Blakestone; she merely protested against an uncalled for attack on him. She would assuredly take pains not to invite such a display again, and therefore a chance to regain his good opinion of all women was gone. Harding felt that Miss Sander-son had given him an opportunity to see that the sex was not wholly vain and selfish.

He pondered schemes for reinstating himself in her good graces for several days, during which he caught only glimpses of her. Naturally, he grew more and more interested. Wholly apart from her undeniable beauty, to which he was scarcely susceptible, he liked the expression of her face, the frankness of her manner with others, the way in which she managed to reserve much solitude for herself. These things spoke to him of character, and character was the one thing that Harding had generally denied to women. Had it been another false calculation of his? this assumption that all women were shallow?

Harding's career had suddenly come to a disastrous end a few months before — ten years' stiff work gone for nothing. A bridge which he and his partner had been erecting had collapsed when half completed. His partner and friend had perished in the wreck. The catastrophe was due to an error made by a careless subordinate. It should have been checked and corrected. A lesser man would have blamed the dead. Harding took the blame on his own shoulders and found himself a marked man, an

32 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

engineer whose reputation and future lay in a river bed under tons of wasted steel and concrete. He had taken his medicine without a whimper, avoided pity and sympathy, and quietly made up his mind to a fresh start in a new country.

The tremendous change in his material outlook brought its due mental and moral sequence; he distrusted everything he had formerly accepted. If mathematical calculations could fail and destroy life, surely other reckonings, though commonly received as true, might prove faulty under special stress. His world was chaos.

Youth, undiminished energy and a strong will refused, however, to admit that another world might not be built on a firmer basis. He had detected the error that killed his friend and partner. Likely he could find the weak point in his own life, his mental life which was now a heap of ruins. This was what he was seeking. But he was a man who had so often gone over his figures that he could not trust his addition. He might make the same mistake each time. He must take a new column with its components rearranged.

To accomplish this he had thrown up the task of rehabilitating himself in New York, and had asked an old friend for something to do outside of the United States. He had been promptly offered a position on construction work at Apia and he was now on his way to Samoa.

It was at once a profound relief and an enormous perplexity to have ended one period of life and to have begun another. The relief was in putting forever behind him a complete failure. The perplexity

was to avoid accepting things at their former value. Retrospect might be wholesome, as philosophers taught, but he found it painful. Hope might shine brightly, as the poets sang, but its light did not penetrate far into the future. So he had sat by himself and meditated until Miss Sanderson broke in upon his solitude and called his attention to the fact that others were trying to solve the problem of how to live.

He came to the conclusion that by his incivility he had done two things: spoiled an opportunity to get a fresh view of humanity's problem — she must have ideas on it — and hurt a woman's feelings. The first was his own loss. The second could only be expiated by an apology. He determined to make one.

Here he reckoned without Miss Sanderson. She avoided him, and he found no chance whatever to speak to her during the ten days it took the *Maitai* to steam from Honolulu to Pago Pago. It was there that he was to leave the ship and proceed to his new position. Instead he went ashore, threw up his place and paid his passage on to Suva, an act which he could only explain to himself on the ground that it did not matter where he made his new beginning. He was flattered to observe a flash of astonishment in Miss Sanderson's eyes when she saw him after the *Maitai* had resumed her voyage. He perceived that she had expected him to leave at Samoa. She had not forgotten him, at any rate.

That evening he tried to speak to her. She calmly ignored his attempt.

"If she's going to pay me that compliment, I'll go clear to Atui before I give up," he said grimly to himself.

CHAPTER V

ON THE *Spindrift*

AT Suva Moira Sanderson found Captain Randall, unchanged by the passing years, solicitous about luggage and freight. The mariner was duly flattered by her instant recognition. Cap in hand he inquired about her journey and asked her commands. Her impulse was to direct him to shave and see a manicure, but she reserved this for another season and gave him a list of her boxes and trunks. Then she demanded to know when she could go aboard the schooner. It appeared that the boat was waiting for her on the beach.

"Accommodations on the *Spindrift* aren't what you might call handsome," the captain remarked. "You know only your father or some workmen ever travel on her as passengers. But I had the boys clean out a cabin for you."

"Anything will suit me," she told him. "When will you sail?"

"To-night," was the response. Then, anxiously, "You don't mind the smell of sulphur, do you, Miss?"

"Sulphur?" she ejaculated.

"Sulphur," he repeated firmly. "I fumigated a room for you."

"I sha'n't mind. Sulphur is clean."

"Very," was the dry response. "You can sleep on deck if you can't manage below. We won't be over eight days running to Atui." He then inquired bashfully what special provisions she would like bought for her table. In this discussion, rendered complex by the fact that all available edibles were tinned, she did not observe that a third person awaited speech with Captain Randall. But when she had finished her instructions she recognised the voice that said, "Excuse me, captain. I wish a passage to Atui."

She swung round and saw Harding. She favoured him with a cool nod and most unwillingly graced this by a warm blush. He removed his cap.

Randall was evidently perplexed between his obligations as a skipper and his duties to his owner's daughter. Moira observed that the master of the *Spindrift* was respectful to his prospective passenger, and this small fact told her volumes. Respect is not shown the undeserving in those latitudes.

"It depends on Miss Moira — Miss Sanderson," Randall said, brushing his grizzled hair with one hand. "As a matter of fact, this is a special trip to take her down. I dunno?" He glanced at her.

"It matters nothing to me," she said promptly.

There was a brief silence. Harding did not offer to put down his hand luggage, and Randall seemed deep in thought, glancing from one to the other. "I dunno whether Sanderson would like it," he suggested.

"In that case, how long before you will be back?" Harding asked.

"Two months, probably," was the answer.

86 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

Harding smiled. "I hope you will take me this trip."

"It depends on the young lady," the captain repeated.

In distaste at standing in the hot sun and discussing the matter as if it were intimate to herself, Moira broke in, "Oh, bring him along!"

"Right!" said Randall, much relieved, and raised his cry for the boat-boys.

So it was that when the *Spindrift* fled to sea that night under a splendid starry sky Moira Sanderson had Harding beside her. He stood near the wheel-box, swinging easily to the roll of the schooner, bare-headed, silent, inscrutable. He had said nothing to her since they had embarked in the whaleboat on the beach.

To Moira the change from the comfortable *Maitai* to the ill-smelling, stuffy little vessel was depressing. The first sniff of her cabin, redolent of sulphur and cocoanut oil, had sickened her. She had burned her fingers trying to light the wretched oil lamp on the bulkhead. There was no place to hang her travelling gowns. Her hand baggage, piled high, made two steps either way out of the question. The twisted mirror was a torment.

Once on deck, she was in no humour to face such horrors again, and she resented Harding's presence. He was evidently an adventurer. What could a respectable engineer be going to Atui for? Atui was, she remembered, the haunt of pearl-divers, wandering traders, out-at-the-heels rascals and boisterous soldiers of fortune. Hadn't he intended to stop at Samoa? Why had he changed his plans at the

last moment? It was perfectly clear that he was not expected in Atui and so he must be going there haphazard.

She felt herself pursued.

Had Harding addressed her or given her any opening for an expression of cool resentment she would have been better satisfied. She needed something to go on; she was used to construing each situation that confronted her and acting according to her judgment. Here she was at a loss, even at a disadvantage, for she was wholly in the dark as to his plans or purpose. But she remained on deck.

The little craft slipped along under quiet sails. Randall had promptly turned in as soon as the course was set, and the mate, a sinister-looking Portuguese, smoked one cigarette after another while seated on the weather rail. He paid no attention to the passengers, except to pass around them somewhat ostentatiously when he wished to look at the compass.

Harding, taciturn as he was, was restraining within himself many thoughts he might have uttered aloud. Had he been alone on the quarterdeck he would have given audible vent to his dissatisfaction with himself. As it was, he was forced to consider in silence the fatuity of his presence on the *Spindrift*.

Whim! Childishness! were the words he would have used to describe his action in abandoning Samoa for Atui. His purpose of apologising appeared in its true light — a flimsy pretext for a wild adventure. In the feeblest fashion, like a bewildered mariner who takes an unknown star for his guide in default of a familiar planet, Harding had taken Thomas

38 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Sanderson's daughter for his pilot. And whither was he going? What was his course?

He put his finger on the moment when this preposterous delusion had attacked him: it was when Moira Sanderson had shown him the title of "The Will to Live," the most unexpected volume he could have imagined in such hands. Who would have said that a haughty beauty was devoted to austere philosophy, particularly when that beauty was heiress to a man renowned through many degrees of latitude and longitude for cruelty, avarice and loose living? And what a result to happen to him from that innocent combination of a two deck-chairs and a dull book! He had been suddenly deluded into thinking that to follow a girl he barely knew, whither he knew not at all, was more important than an opening career and a settled life.

He realised that the future was but vaguely within his power to control. There was a weak fibre somewhere in himself with which he had never reckoned. He had tossed away a chance for a new, respectable life simply because a woman, whom he cared nothing for, had interested him. The man who could do that was certainly the sport of destiny.

On his immediate prospects he speculated long. What was Atui, the infamous, like? What place was there for him in such a community? Was there any work for an ambitious man?

Harding had saved out of the wreck of his life a strong pride in his own honesty. And that simple basis of self-esteem demanded that he go plainly about his business and show not only Miss Sanderson, but her world, that his presence on the *Spindrift*

was not fortune-hunting as society looks at it, and as it must appear, but merely an acceptance of her unconscious guidance at a time when his sky held no familiar lode-star. Yet this same honesty demanded that he realise that such beauty and grace might well become to him a prize to be won at all hazards. In fine, apology was out of the question. Explain he could not. So he was silent, knowing from her manner that she distrusted him.

At last she went below, nodding good night. He lit his pipe. It was but half smoked when she returned in soft negligee. "I simply can't stop in that room," she murmured. "It's so smelly."

"The sulphur? Let me fetch you a chair," he suggested promptly.

She acquiesced and he returned from his own cabin with a wicker lounge he had thoughtfully picked up in Suva. This he fixed for her in a sheltered nook. She sank back on it with a sigh of relief.

Silence followed after Moira had coldly granted Harding permission to smoke. He sat on the heavy bitts and stared at the deep purple of the sky where it mingled on the horizon with the darker sea. The soft airs that filled the sails eddied down over him like the gentle breath of a young and slumbering world.

When Captain Randall came on deck at midnight, Harding was still smoking. Moira lay asleep, her cheek on her arm. He nodded to Harding and muttered gently, "It's twelve years ago since I took her up to Honolulu and put her on the steamer for San Francisco. Little mite of a girl with long legs, she

40 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

was. Mother was dead, and the old man sent her off to learn manners and books. Look at her now — a picture!”

His auditor assented gravely. The skipper took a few steps along the deck and back. “Atui’s no place for her, I tell you,” he growled in an undertone. “It’s a nice town and all that — Sanderson is a manager, though most people don’t know it because he keeps his mouth shut — but if I had a girl like that I’d keep her up in the States or across in Melbourne. She ain’t used to roughing it with our sort.”

“I suppose her father wants her with him — lonesome and all that,” Harding remarked.

Randall shook his head. “I dunno. They say Sanderson and Mrs. Mallew are going to be married. That will let *her* out.”

The captain drew Harding to the forward rail and there set himself to pass the watch by explaining to his passenger something of the situation in Atui, garnishing his narrative with many a brief and spicy tale of men and women and their ways and byways.

CHAPTER VI

"HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED"

A FINE morning in September the *Spindrift* was making slowly through the pass into the harbour of Atui. On either hand the hills that concealed the bay from the sea opened out in long arcs to sweep about the lagoon and join at the foot of the blue, high peak from which the island took its name. Lying in the shadow of this elevation was the city, bordering the slender white inner beach in its various aspects of sordidness, solidity and pleasant lightness. The eye instantly distinguished its three divisions into a slum, a market-place and the homes. The first, lying along the extreme left of the bay, showed expanses of grey sand dotted with long, unpainted sheds, huddled clumps of miserable shanties and a central mass of stout structures surmounted by smoking chimneys. The second, the centre of Atui, had been built lately, for it shone in fresh paint and gaudy colours. Most of the buildings were of one story, but three rose to a height of four, many-windowed and flashing in the sun. To the right, red roofs appeared among the green trees and here and there the straight line of a road gave a vista of flowery lawns and embowered porches.

In the immediate centre of the lagoon-shore was a long pier, a steel structure which ran out into the

42 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

water like the handle of a palm fan, if the city were considered the leaf.

"It's quite a city," Harding remarked.

Captain Randall turned to Moira. "Some changes, eh? Remember how we used to land in small boats right on the beach? This is what your father has been doing all these years you've been away — making a city out of a trading station."

She returned no answer. She had left Atui, a child disturbed in its dreams. Twelve active and happy years had passed. A journey half round the world had not prepared her for this. She was again the child, awakening from a dream. The Atui she had known was gone. In its stead stood a new, unfamiliar, alien city. Surely behind this was — must be — her old town with its meandering lanes and women grinding meal to dismal chants. But this first impression faded again. Old memories flooded over her, obliterating the new and the strange. Her nostrils lifted to the old familiar scents and she shook her head vigorously, as a child does when excited. Even the long-forgotten native speech brimmed to her lips.

Randall glanced at her white face and was silent. He steered carefully for the pier. As the sails one by one fell to the boom, he leaned over with a dim notion of reassuring her. "After all, it's changed for the better, miss. Your father will be glad to see you."

She recovered herself painfully. The dirty seaman beside her seemed an only friend in a lonely world.

“I haven’t seen papa for so long!” she breathed.

The captain laid a grimy finger on her arm. “The old man’s just the same as ever,” he said in his hoarse voice. “If I were you I’d just sit tight a while till I saw how the land lay. Some things have changed.”

His friendly intention was so plain that she thanked him heartily and strained her eyes to detect the familiar tall figure amid the crowd that now lined the quay. She saw many faces, many forms; they were all strange. She could not discern her father. Randall, yielding the wheel to a seaman, observed her scrutiny and understood it. “He never comes down,” he told her.

The lines were ashore, and the *Spindrift* edged into her berth with creak of chafed timbers and complaint of taut cables. Harding stepped up to her. “Can I help you at all?” he asked.

She shook her head. “Thank you. The captain will see to my luggage and look after me.” Then she offered him her hand in cool farewell.

He murmured a word and went to the cabin whence he quickly reappeared with some suitcases. He was first ashore and she saw him greet a young man on the pier whose starched white ducks, delicately coloured shirt and fashionable straw hat marked him among the crowd. She thought it evident that they were former acquaintances and that neither had expected to see the other. Then Randall came with a gruff, “Here we are, Miss Moira,” and she followed him to the pier.

The throng of natives and whites made way for

44 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

her, staring curiously. She felt their eyes on her back. She managed a shy glance ahead. No known face was to be seen. She felt terribly homesick.

At last, on the broad coral road that circled the bay and was in turn circled by the city, she stopped to fix a landmark. All was changed. Where she had once played under a spreading algaroba tree planted by missionaries, a smart shop now displayed its wares. Past it ran a smooth street which must have been the shaded lane that used to wind around till it came to the Big House—her father's house, her home.

Randall helped her into a waiting carriage, deposited the suitcases by the side of the native driver and gave him an order. They were off at a trot, the wheels singing over the crisp, coral surface.

"Your father expects you, all right," the captain muttered, pointing to the roof that rose above the palms on the first hill. "The ensign is flying."

She looked up to see an American flag floating in the soft breeze of the morning. It took a little off of the edge of her homesickness. She grew impatient of the slow progress of the carriage.

In due time, they turned into a roadway which instantly recalled her childhood. It wound among great-boled trees, whose heavy foliage allowed only here and there a patch of sunshine to lie on the short turf. A grass hut, babyhood's play-house, still stood with door agape in welcome. They drew up before a long, freshly painted porch. An elderly man sat in a high cane chair at the top of the steps. She leaped out, face aglow. "Papa!" she cried.

Sanderson got up stiffly, displaying a tall, meagre frame clad in rust-coloured cotton coat and trousers. His faded blue shirt was collarless, making his brown, knotted neck seem extraordinarily long. A clipped beard of a ruddy tinge matched hazel eyes and heavy sable brows. He held out his hand as she hurried up the steps, took her fresh fingers in his own and muttered awkwardly, "Well, it's Moira."

She would have kissed him, but the moment passed. He stared at her, wrinkling his lean cheeks into a faint smile, and then turned to Randall, who was bringing up the luggage. "Take my daughter's stuff over to the Red House," he ordered.

Moira heard, but paid little heed. She was for tripping on into the hallway. "I must see if the old place is just the same!" she cried.

"Later," said Sanderson, shaking his head. "I want you to drive over with Randall to the Red House. I've had it fixed up for you. We'll talk later."

"But —" she protested, pouting.

A sharp side-glance from the captain stopped her. She picked up her white skirts and fled down into the carriage, sending a smile over her shoulder. Randall hurried the luggage back into place by the driver, gave that stolid individual a quiet word and they were off.

Something moved Moira to look back at her father. She turned her eyes to the front again with half a sob.

"Your father built the Red House last year," her escort told her in evident haste to obliterate the bad impression her reception had made on her. "It's

46 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

above the town — pretty spot — quite comfortable — good view.”

“Any place!”

The road, skirting the low bench of land which made the first step to the mountain, gave flashing vistas of the bay, of the nestling town and the arms stretched seaward to the far, surf-fringed outer beach. Away up Atui's slopes, a rain cloud hung like a shred of veiling caught on some projecting. Little streams slipped across the terrace through channels of sparkling gravel. The odour of sweet scented flowers dripped from the trees like an aerial sap. But Moira saw only the humped shoulders of the driver.

Yet, when they came in sight of the Red House, she could not refrain from an exclamation of repulsion. It stood nakedly lurid in the middle of a yard devoid of grass or greenery. On either side of it sickly bananas drooped their huge, foul blossoms. A dismal pine tree dropped rusty needles on a rickety walk of flimsy boards that had once served in packing cases. The windows were latticed. The door seemed to have been slammed shut years before.

“It doesn't look as nice as it is,” Randall muttered, helping her out.

She faced him as if to ask a question. His eyes fell. She flushed hotly, said nothing and wearily mounted the three steps to the little porch.

While she stood there, feeling absolutely alone and helpless in the face of such a reception after twelve years' absence, the door opened. A tall, dark-faced woman stood waiting for her. She looked,

smiled, sobbed and ran into the harbourage of the arms that went out for her.

"Nurse!" she cried.

The Atuan, after the manner of her people, laughed. Moira recognised the soft sound as the equivalent of tears.

Randall put the luggage on the porch, expectorated dismally on the raw soil and went back to the carriage. He realised that something of expected warmth had been lacking in this homecoming.

"I wonder how much she knows about it all!" he muttered to himself.

CHAPTER VII

THE OTHER WOMAN

MOIRA had seen what Captain Randall had suspected she had. She had not drawn the conclusion he feared. Maidenly reserve, the long cherished image of her father, the memory of her mother, all prevented the flash of illumination which the glimpse of a strange woman in her home doorway would have brought to a more sophisticated girl. Now she put her tender shrinkings away from her in the pleasure of crying on the old Atuan's broad bosom.

Her tears died at last, she smiled, brushed her hair and announced herself ready to inspect her new home. "Papa said I was to live here," she informed Tua.

"Very good! I know!" was the response. "He tell me. I look after you all right!"

They went over the house together. Moira found it larger than its outward appearance indicated: there were two bedrooms, a dressing-room, a sitting-room open to the air on two sides, a spacious bath and numerous porches tucked into angles. The native woman expressed her own judgment: "Not many house like this on island!"

"Dear, dear! It's so ugly outside!" mourned Moira.

"Just built a short while," was the explanation.

"We'll have a garden and vines and trees," the

new mistress announced. "How thoughtful of papa to build me a house of my own!"

Atui knows no shadows in the communication of facts. Tua smiled. "He build it for 'nother lady," she said bluntly.

"'Nother lady?" murmured Moira, falling back into that easy English dignified by the name of "missionary talk."

"'Nother lady," was the unreserved reply. "Bimeby your papa marry her." Tua met Moira's blazing eyes calmly. She remembered the paroxysms of wrath that had marked her nursling's childhood and did not argue. It was to be expected that Sanderson's daughter should indulge in baseless anger once in a while. She suggested luncheon.

"I won't eat a bite in this place," said Moira between set teeth. "You say that my father built this house for some woman that he's going to marry?"

"Yes," Tua replied, spreading a white mat across the little dining-table.

"Oh!" exclaimed Moira, anger subsiding into acute distress. There flooded to memory recollection of Mr. and Mrs. Howard's dismay at her avowed purpose of coming to Atui, the sly remarks of the pursuer of the *Maitai*, Randall's odd silences. Her swift thoughts reached their sharp conclusion: an adventuress! Some woman had turned her father's head, broken her mother's image in his heart! And everybody except she had known of the awful affair!

Her first definite feeling was one of intense disgust. After the clean atmosphere of college and its society to be thrust into the tainted air of a sordid intrigue! She tried to curse her father as a traitor.

50 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

to her mother and to herself. She had come down to Atui as a dutiful daughter to make a home for him. She had planned their life together, her own part in Atui's progress, a thousand little things which were to make up a total sum of happiness and contentment. All for nothing! Another woman had ousted her. Her own high ambitions were destined to fall in ruin because an old man had fallen prey to the wiles of a worthless woman. "She must be worthless!" she cried aloud.

The Atuan made no sign of hearing this outburst. She merely glanced gravely at her former pet, noting flushed cheeks and moist lashes. That sedate look stirred Moira to her last and profoundest depth: she was alone in a strange and unfriendly world.

She felt stifled in a house that had been desecrated by the hated usurper, went out on the porch and stood at the top of the steps with clenched hands and blazing eyes. She throbbed with sorrow and indignation. She saw herself abandoned on a desert island, marooned by malignant fates. Bitterly she recalled the tie that bound her to the old man who had selfishly put away his daughter from his house in favour of an unknown and unknowable woman. Quick flashes of memory brought up the squat images of the precious boxes she had packed in Bryn Mawr and San Francisco; their contents once dear, but now a mockery. The future held nothing.

The vivacity of her outraged sensibilities closed her eyes to the figure of a young man who stood at the roadside, straw hat in hand, waiting for the opportunity to address her. Without in the least grasping the meaning of her posture and her stony ex-

pression, he admired the tense beauty of her form, the sheen of her brown eyes and the proud poise of her small head. To himself he made a single remark, "Chip off the old block. Temper!"

Not being of the breed that long endures inattention, he brushed imperceptible dust from his patent leather shoes and advanced to the foot of the steps. From that humble position he called up, "I say, Miss Sanderson!"

Moirá glanced down at him, smothered the blaze in her eyes and said, "Yes?"

"You *are* Miss Sanderson, aren't you?" demanded the youth, coming up one step.

"Yes."

"I heard you had come," he went on, rising the second degree. "I'm Percy Williams, your father's secretary."

The reference to her parent made her doubly chilly. "What can I do for you?"

"I came to call," he returned debonairly. "Thought I'd see whether there was anything I could do for you.—Part of my duties, I suppose!"

She appraised his dumpy figure, pale blue eyes, small nose, wide mouth, finicking dress and allowed herself a smile. "Come up! I didn't know my father had a secretary."

"Changes! Changes!" he proclaimed gravely, stepping upon the porch and leaning his light stick against the rail. "I thought a secretary was the final touch. I see it is the lovely daughter."

The impudence of the remark was glossed by the evident lack of intent to offend. She shook his outstretched hand and tried to remove from her face

52 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

the last trace of her deeper feeling. "I'm sure I don't know what you could do to help me," she said, lightly enough. "I have old Tua with me."

"Tua? Tua?" he repeated with wrinkled brows. "Oh, yes! the old dame!"

"She was my nurse."

Williams pondered this to see if it needed reply. Thinking of nothing to say on the subject, he turned and admired the view. "Nice situation! Trust Mrs. Mallew to find the spot for comfort."

"Was — was it Mrs. Mallew that built this house?" she ventured.

"Your father had it built for her — under her instructions," the secretary said blandly.

"So good of her to let me have it," Moira returned with a simplicity that gave the young man some perplexity.

"Oh, Mr. Sanderson saw to it that she was comfortable in her new place," he informed her.

At this moment Tua appeared in the doorway with a curt "Eat!"

"Dear me!" Williams said, "is it that time? May I join you?"

Her sparkling resentment was lost on him. He bowed her in, and she acknowledged the supremacy of his audacity. Seated at the table, while Tua laid another place for the secretary, she said in her childliest tones, "I expect my father will be here soon."

"You will tell him I called to see what I could do?" he suggested, helping himself to salad. "You see," he went on, as if confidentially, "my job is a hard one. But I should hate to lose it, specially now that you've come to liven us all up."

She decided to make the best of this preposterous creature. "How long have you been here?" she inquired.

"A year. Dropped down to see Atua, spent my money —" he indicated the process by a large gesture — "called on the old man — I mean your father — asked him for a loan, was refused, came again, stayed to supper and was engaged as secretary."

"It must be hard work," she agreed.

"Very. Rotten letters to write. Bills to check up. Accounts to prepare. Talk to traders. Bully the natives. Amuse Mrs. Mallew." He sighed.

"It sounds very difficult," she murmured. "Especially the last!"

"Mrs. Mallew," he said gravely, "is very hard to entertain. No small talk. She lacks variety. Between you and me, Miss Sanderson, she is dull. No brains!"

Moira changed the topic. "I have no acquaintance with the woman. I see that Atua has grown."

"Over twelve thousand people now," he informed her, helping himself to bread. "Last year the Boss — I mean your father — put the whole place under government — chief of police, police force, judge, and so on. Regular city it is, now. No more disorder. The electric lights help out, too. Before long we'll have a regular steamship to Sidney."

She was interested. "Any schools?"

"One. Missionary school. For natives, of course. Run by old Harrow. Great old boy, Harrow is. He swallowed the catechism when he was a boy and it's set heavy on his stomach ever since. He has one rule of life: never agree with anybody

54 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

for agreeing is sin. We ought to have a school for the white kids, as well. But most of 'em are sent home, of course."

"Is there a library?" Moira asked.

"That's what we ought to have," was the reply.

"I hope you've brought plenty of new books, Miss Sanderson. We've read the ones we have till the covers flop like wet paper."

"Do you read much?"

"Heaps. A chap's got to occupy his mind some way. Particularly when his salary's so small he can't enjoy himself in other ways."

He chattered on, airing his little affectations and witticisms in pure gratitude for a new face to enliven. Luncheon over he showed her that he was truly friendly. He drew her out upon the porch there to confide and warn.

"Now look here, Miss Sanderson," he said, twirling his straw hat which she handed to him without any effect, "I ain't blind. I see points without having them jab me in the eye. Be honest, now: you never expected a Mrs. Mallew?"

She hesitated between her natural impulse to be silent about family matters with strangers and a feeling that the impudent, ill-bred youth before her was really cognisant not only of much of her father's business but, most likely, of her own affairs. She decided on cautious frankness. "Nobody said anything to me about her."

"Sure not! When you wrote you were coming, your father gave me the letter. 'She'll come,' he told me. 'I never interfere with anybody's plans. I don't want any fuss.' He took the letter and an-

swered it himself. 'Percy, my boy,' says I, 'when the Boss,—' I mean your father—' says he doesn't want any fuss, keep your mouth closed.' I did. Mrs. Mallew came to me with tears in her eyes. 'If I'm to be a stepmother I —'

Moir's eyes flashed. "Has she married him?"

The secretary shook his head. "Engaged. She says she won't marry him till you're disposed of."

"Disposed of!"

"Now look here," said Williams anxiously. "Don't you go and make a fuss. I'll lose my job. Your father never interferes with other people and he don't stand other people interfering with him. I'm only trying to do the friendly thing!" He fixed pale eyes on her pleadingly. "And how can I if you fly off the handle the minute I start explaining?"

Moir bit her lip. "Go on!" she murmured presently.

"That's better," he approved. "I trust to your honour not to make a fuss. Maybe I didn't express myself just right. Mrs. Mallew told me she wanted to do the square thing. 'I'm not going to marry the old gentleman and have a row on my hands with an uppish girl,' were her words. See? She means all right."

The question would out. "Is she — is she — good looking?"

"Not in the morning," was his simple reply.

Her laughter, almost hysterical, made him peevish. "I say, it's no joke!" he remonstrated. "*She means it!*"

Such an attitude on the part of a fatuous youth

chilled her. She stared at him haughtily. "Means what?" she demanded.

"To marry him," he said sulkily. "And say, she's straight enough, too." Her warm flush dismayed him. He stammered on, "Naturally, I don't know much about her past—if she has one. Widow, she says. Mallew dead. Wants a home — a perfect lady!"

The colour deepened on Moira's cheeks. "No more about the — the lady," she said chokingly. "What is it you wanted to warn me about?"

He snatched at the word: "Warn? Yes! Sure! Certainly! Don't make a fuss. Easy's the word! Go easy!"

"Thank you," said Moira, on the verge of tears. "Thank you!"

She fled into the house without a word of farewell. He picked up his stick and went down the steps slowly. "Pretty as a picture!" he muttered. "But temper? Percy, my boy, she's bound to make a fuss." He sighed.

CHAPTER VIII

A PRINCELY GIFT

IN the afternoon a laughing, noisy lot of natives brought to the Red House the several packing-cases which represented Moira's newest and oldest belongings. Though sick at heart, she spurred herself to receive them and directed the placing of the heavy boxes where she could open them at leisure. Tua watched the proceedings, now and again replying with a curt word to some pleasantry of the workmen. When the last man had departed she brought a hatchet.

"Open them?" she asked, childishly eager.

Moira indicated a case that held her school-books and music. Tua set briskly to work, and under her stout blows the iron straps parted and the boards came off. Her mistress stared down at the neatly packed volumes and idly picked up a sheet of music from the top. With a smile of self-derision she remembered that she had no piano. And what was the use of unpacking in another woman's house?

She heard a heavy step on the porch and turned to see her father enter.

"That's right," he said amiably. "Get settled, Moira."

She tried to smile, looking into his lean, hard face.

58 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

"The men brought this stuff here and Tua would open it," she remarked.

"Why not?" her father demanded, catching the chilliness in her voice.

"Is this where I'm to live?" she inquired curtly, afraid to allow any sign of her tenderer feelings to escape.

"Where else?" he said slowly. "I had the place all fixed up for you."

"I thought I was coming home."

Sanderson's hand rested on his short beard. He glanced thoughtfully at his handsome daughter. "Well," he said presently, "I thought you would be more comfortable here. After all, I've lived a bachelor so long that I don't think you'd care for the old house. You see—"

"I see," she said stiffly. "When are you going to marry again?"

Thomas Sanderson had a reputation for coming to the point in a discussion with brutal brevity. A gleam of admiration shone in his eyes at this challenge thrown down by his daughter.

"I haven't decided," he said quietly. "Have you seen Mrs. Mallew?"

"I've heard of her—everywhere," she replied, hiding her confusion by picking books out of the box.

"She is an excellent woman," Sanderson went on, seating himself. "A very considerate woman, too. She thought of your comfort."

Moira flashed at him, "Did you?"

Her father's harsh face almost beamed. "No. Except to try to keep you up on the Coast where

you belong. I told Howard to have you stop with him a while."

"Then I have no place with my father?" she murmured.

The old man tipped back in his chair. "I haven't seen you for twelve years," he said abruptly. "Do you mind if I stay a while and get acquainted?"

"It's your house," she answered, without turning around.

"Yours, my dear. You've grown into a fine looking woman. You look like your mother."

"Are you disappointed?"

He was hurt at last. She had penetrated his armour — and was suddenly sorry. He seemed at a loss for an answer, brushed his beard, glanced about the room and then smiled faintly.

"Moirā," he said earnestly, "you're off on the wrong foot. You go to school in the States for a dozen years and come back with an education, a lot of ideas and your own proud ways, to find that your father hasn't been to school with you and is the same crusty fellow you left him. You pick up some gossip, consider yourself insulted, and take it out on me. As a matter of fact, I'm the insulted person. I haven't interfered with you. I've even let you come to Atui. I didn't think you would try to interfere with me. I've as good a right to do and think what I please as you have."

Her contrition was due not so much to his words as to his tone of genuine feeling. She turned to him with swift tears. "Papa! Papa! I didn't mean to be nasty! I — I'm homesick!"

Their eyes met, glance to glance, and Sanderson's

60 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

grey lips quivered. She kissed him and they were silent. Tua, bent over the half-empty packing-case, nodded her invisible head.

Presently Sanderson began to speak to his daughter of college. At first she was shy of talking of a portion of her life that now seemed especially sacred; but shrewd questionings started the flow and darkness fell before she had told him half that bubbled to her lips.

"I'll stop for supper," he said, during a pause.

"Do!" she laughed. "I've eaten with strangers for twelve years!"

He winced. "Everybody was good to you?" he demanded with bent brows.

"Everybody! But they weren't folks."

"Folks!" he echoed gently, and fell into a muse. Later he smiled paternally across the table. "You've got folks now."

"So've you!" she cried back.

"Good! I guess old Sanderson will look after his 'folks,' too. Now, girl, let's get down to your plans. You wouldn't be a Sanderson unless you had it pretty clearly in your mind what you intend to do."

"I did have some ideas," she admitted, lamely.

"About what?"

She evaded the immediate question. "You know we studied about a good many things in college," she remarked. "I was so interested in some of the subjects that I thought I might—I thought maybe you—"

His quizzical eyes scanned her flushed face. "Don't be afraid. I sent you to college to learn things. What did you learn?"

"There are so many things in this world!"

"True," was the dry assent.

"And I'd like to do my share of them."

"How?"

"So many people are miserable," she stammered.

"All people are miserable," he corrected her.

"Except those who have plenty to do."

"If they can do it!" she retorted, gaining boldness.

"Anything to prevent your doing what you like?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she confessed. "When I started I thought I knew just what I would do when I got here and was settled. I used to remember so many things about Atui! And now —"

He pinned her down. "Now what?"

"Mrs. Mallew," she breathed.

"We'll talk about Mrs. Mallew another time," he responded curtly, but not unkindly. "We're speaking of yourself at present. Be precise. This is business, my girl."

The word stimulated her. It cast things into their due proportion. Yes, she had "business" — the task of doing what she thought her duty. She straightened herself slightly in her seat and gave him her eyes.

"I want to make Atui a place for happy people," she said.

"And it's not now?"

"Papa! How can you suppose it is? I remember horrid things — awful men, horrid women, poor natives worked to death, miserable children, wretched wives — oh, the misery I remember!"

62 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"A South Sea trading-station is not a woman's college," he commented.

"But I could make it such a dear place," she cried. "If I only had the chance!"

"How?"

"I've planned it all out," she told him. "It's perfectly simple. I know just what the matter is with everybody, and, if I don't, I can find out. Then I'll make them happy and contented. If I just had Atui under my own thumb for a while I'd show you what I'd do!"

His brown fingers drummed on the table mat. His brows were drawn down till she barely caught the glint of his eyes. She knew that when he spoke it would be his ultimate decision. He would ask no more details. He would either allow her to work without interference from Mrs. Mallew, or tell her he could not approve of her purpose. Thomas Sanderson spoke but once on matters of business. She waited.

When he looked up she saw that she had won a victory. He put her object in a nut-shell:

"You think you'd like to run this city to suit yourself? Well, if you don't interfere with my affairs you can have Atui for a plaything." He swept his hand out toward the city below them. "Run it to suit yourself. If you know any way to make 'em happier, go ahead. We shan't do things by halves, my girl. I present you with the city of Atui, men, women and children, police force, court and treasury, for five years. I know nothing of your scheme but I believe in you. I haven't the faintest inkling of your ideas. But you have 'em, and I believe in letting

everybody follow his own notions. I won't interfere with you. I never interfere with anybody unless he first interferes with me. If you think you can run Atui better than I can, you're welcome to try."

She could hardly believe her ears. She had asked to be allowed to try a plan without interposition of any other person between her father and herself. She had been granted a city. She gazed at Sanderson with suffused eyes.

He rose, reached up and switched on the electric above the table. "You have modern improvements and plenty of money. I put this place on a self-supporting basis some time ago. Go ahead and make this town a town where 'happy people can live.'" He uttered the final phrase half-humorously.

When she was convinced of the magnitude of the gift he had made her, she again fell silent, to murmur presently, "I'll need help."

Sanderson frowned. "Don't try to mix me up in this," he said brusquely. "I'm neither a college graduate nor a philanthropist. I merely built the town up into the biggest in these latitudes. I've got a lot of islands under a treaty and I have work to do besides kindergartening in Atui. I'll send the chief of police and the treasurer and the judge up to report to you. Tell 'em what you wish them to do, and if they don't do it, fire 'em! I'll back you that far."

Choked with strange emotions Moira left the lit room and went to the porch whence she gazed down upon the lights that marked the extent of her new possession. Never had she even dreamed of such

64 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

an opportunity to work. She had vaguely hoped to better the condition of some few, to start a nucleus for higher development. Now she was presented with the whole city, her own, to do what she liked with! Her breast overflowed with happiness. The future rolled in shining years before her. She saw thousands of contented people looking to her as the source and maintainer of their joy — A city without grief, or sadness, or misery, or unhappiness! Hers!

She became aware that her father was standing beside her. She reached out and took his hand. He answered the soft pressure of her fingers by saying, "It took me twenty-five years to do all this. Men say Sanderson is a hard customer. But he had to build Atui single-handed. Moira,"—pride was resonant in his tone—"just remember this: not many men in this world can present a daughter with an entire city — nor many queens nor kings nor emperors."

Her rapt voice in the words, "I wish mamma were with us here!" sealed the evening's converse.

Sanderson left the Red House at a slow pace, and from the darkness of the road he gazed back with swelling pride at the illumined figure of his daughter in the doorway.

CHAPTER IX

THE REEF

AFTER breakfast, in the first cool of the next day's dawn, Moira dressed herself in clean white and prepared to start upon the duties of a day which marked the end of girlhood and the beginning of active life. Standing on her porch and gazing down the wooded slope to the city, she tried to reason out the first steps she must take to claim her new possession. In spite of her father's crisp words of the evening before, she knew that she could not fully credit his generous gift until she had framed and executed at least one order of her own. What should it be?

Her reverie — for her thoughts refused to march logically — was broken by the sound of wheels and the appearance of a hack with four men in it. She recognised in one of them Williams, the secretary and uninvited guest of the day before. As the vehicle drew up he leaped out, hat in hand, and called to her, "Good morning! Here we are, all the officials of Atui, to receive your orders."

She blushed warmly. "Will you gentlemen come up? I will see you here."

The secretary was the first to the top step, hand outstretched.

"I'm ex-officio a member of the party," he an-

66 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

nounced. "Let me present Mr. Tower, chief of police, harbour-master, health officer and practically mayor — under you."

A tall man in a dirty uniform of white drill gave her a moist hand and mumbled something about "great pleasure." He smelled strongly of liquor and his eyes shifted uneasily before Moira's somewhat disgusted glance.

"Mr. Gustav Sprengl, treasurer of Atui," Williams chanted.

"How are you, Mr. Sprengl?" said Moira more cordially, for the treasurer looked ill and seemed well-bred.

"And Judge Jourjon," the secretary proceeded.

A slender, dark-haired, quick-eyed Frenchman of middle age bowed before her. She instantly liked his manner, which, compared to the secretary's jauntiness, Tower's heavy dulness and Sprengl's timidity, marked a man of intelligence and good balance.

"Mr. Sanderson informed us all last night that he had turned Atui over to your fair hands," Williams continued. "We understand that you are the law and the arm of the law henceforth even to the taking away of our jobs. So here we are, ready for orders."

Moira called in to Tua for chairs and, when all were seated, sat down herself, trying to believe that she was not dreaming. To her relief the irrepressible Williams did not wait for her to break the awkward silence.

"The chief can tell you about present conditions and all that," he said.

Tower brushed his lips with a red hand and stared at the floor.

"I guess everything is going along about as usual," he muttered. "Best thing this lady can do is to leave me to attend to things. Police business is not for a lady."

"Oh, it is!" said Moira, firmly. "But I see your point. I'll go around with you and we can decide what to do after I've seen everything."

"Right!" Williams proclaimed. "Now, Sprengl, what have you to say for yourself?"

The treasurer drew out a packet of papers and handed them to Moira.

"The half-year's accounts," he explained. "You can examine them at your leisure. There is a balance at present of \$17,000 standing on Mr. Sander-son's books to our order. He told me you would audit the bills hereafter and sign the warrants."

"And the chief here will make out *his* report," the secretary interposed.

Moira turned to Judge Jourjon. "I shall need your advice many times," she said civilly.

The Frenchman bowed. "Most happy!" he murmured.

A few casual questions informed Moira that the getting hold of the affairs of a city of twelve thousand inhabitants was not to be done in an hour. So she dismissed her callers, after making an appointment with the chief of police for an afternoon trip of inspection. They retreated to the hack in good order, Williams not joining them. When they were departed he wiped his forehead on a scented handkerchief.

68 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"Well, that's so much done," he said, wrinkling his nose at recollection of the scene. "I stopped over just to let you know who you were dealing with."

Moir, desirous of being alone with her own thoughts, looked at him icily. He was unperturbed.

"Now listen to me, Miss Sanderson," he continued. "First place, you've got your hands full. Second place, you don't know this town as I do. Third place, I'd like to help you."

"I'm much obliged to you," she said, at a loss for some words to send him on his way.

"Certainly you are," said the unabashed youth. "I understand that. You and I hang together. Now, that chief of police will never, no, never give you any information that he doesn't have to. He's a crook and drinks too much. But — he's the man for the job. Good man. Gossip hath it that he was once a British officer. May be. I'd let him go his own way. Bother him, and he'll turn sullen. Give him a free hand and he'll keep the town running like a little red wagon."

She saw that Williams was speaking what he really thought the truth. She nodded to him to go on.

"The treasurer — poor old Sprengl — is a jewel. Your father knows how to pick out the man to handle the coin! The Dutchman has a weak stomach and can't drink, a weak heart and can't gamble, a wife devoted to him and can't be out o' nights. Result, honesty of the purest water. The only thing you musn't trust him with is ink. He'll waste it by the gallon to write you reports and balance sheets."

"The judge? the French gentleman?" she murmured.

Williams waved his white hand airily. "He used to be a French agent somewhere. Came to Atui to represent some big company. Uppish, smart as a foreigner can be—well, you know! Not an American like us! One never knows just where to take him."

Moira smiled for the first time during this recital. "I see: you and he differ about things."

"You'll find I know a thing or two about Atui," was the response.

She made a slight gesture a cleverer man would have accepted as a polite dismissal. Williams nursed his ankle and stared at her with undisturbed placidity.

"I wonder what you are going to think of the whole business?" he queried. "You are a strange bird for these shores. You're good looking, well-educated—for a woman—and backed by more money than a hundred-handed man could shake sticks at."

Moira rose. "Really," she said coldly. "Will you excuse me, Mr. Williams? I'm not specially interested in your mental processes and—spare me your debates as to what I'm going to do."

He dropped his foot from his knee and smiled good humouredly. "Offended?" He shook his head solemnly. "It won't do. Mustn't get offended. You know I want to help you."

She frowned. "I'm not accustomed to being spoken to in that way," she said with sudden intensity.

The secretary leaped to his feet. "I beg your

70 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

pardon," he said promptly, bowed and took himself off. When a Sanderson spoke in that tone it was safest to yield, as Williams knew from experience. He bore no ill-will.

During the luncheon Moira tried to reread portions of "The Will to Live," especially those passages where Professor Blakestone had pointed out enormities in our present social organism. In the presence of a Tower, a Williams, a Sprengel, and a Jourjon the abstractions seemed little applicable to Atui. She was forced back upon the statement of the old man in the Pullman sleeper: "Happiness is the reflection upon us from the outside." She allowed herself to think of Atui as a city reflected in her own heart as in a mirror. If she were unhappy that meant that Atui still held unhappiness. If she was without discontent or sense of sadness, then her city was as it should be. She enjoyed this thought with the satisfaction of many a philanthropist who turns from sordid reality to more easily managed figures of speech.

She recalled her mind from such play. "I must be practical," she told herself. The plans she had made during the trip from Philadelphia to San Francisco no longer seemed childish. They had the merit of dealing with actual conditions, foolish as they might sound when defined in words. A Blakestone might laugh at them as a reduction of sociology to the absurd. Moira's feminine instincts assured her that she could not go far wrong in an attempt to put them into practice.

She dressed her prettiest and asked Tua to order a cab. The old nurse pointed to the telephone and informed her that Sanderson had provided her with

a private carriage. She ordered its immediate appearance.

The drive down to the building which housed the offices of the city magistrates delighted her. She saw that the streets had been laid out like the rays of a fan from the road that circled the bay. Parallel to this main thoroughfare, called the Parade, other semicircular streets rose like steps up the hill. Rolling down one of the fan-rays she looked at neat cottages and bungalows settled cosily beneath dark green trees; at old grass huts reminiscent of the time when Atui was only a trading-station among the natives; at wretched shacks where squalid women stood and stared from crooked doorways. The comfortable buildings set a standard; the squalour was work for her hand.

She found the chief of police waiting for her, dressed in a fresh uniform and quite sober. He received her with almost obsequious civility. She brushed aside his laboured compliments and drove to the point. "Get in with me and we'll look over the town," she said.

"I've had a report made out," he remarked.

She took the paper. "I'll examine it later. Now I must use my eyes."

His discomfort was apparent when she ordered the driver to go to the upper end of the Parade.

"That's the Reef," he told her. "It's only a labourer's place. Dirty lot of natives!"

She nodded. "Exactly what I wish to see."

An hour spent in peering into steaming sheds, where half-naked men and women toiled twelve hours in the day, gave her a pallor from which her velvety

72 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

eyes shone marvellously. She was weary as she counted the filthy drinking dens huddled on every corner; she noted with increasing pain the half-insolent, half-piteous women who sauntered in the shade, decked with faded wreaths of flowers; observed the almost endless variety of miserable men lounging along the beach like debris thrown up by the tide. Under a lucid and benignant sky these creatures sprawled in wretched protest against unrelenting destiny; destiny which seeks out a man's weakness through the armour of his pride, which mocks at boastful hope and secret ambition, whose inexorable fingers close round its victim to crush out courage and manfulness and self-respect.

A vagabond, exhilarated with raw gin, passed her carriage where it stood a moment in this infamous precinct, glanced at its fair occupant and flourished a ragged straw hat. Her troubled eyes met his, and suddenly, as if the man's shamed and hidden soul were evoked, he changed from a boisterous ruffian to a silent and respectful onlooker. He stood with bared head in the hot sunlight, steady-eyed, calm, unobsequious. Tower glared at him, leaned out and shook a coarse finger. "Move on, there! What d'ye mean, you beach-comber?"

The fellow's thin face reddened. He spoke quietly to Moira. "You understand, ma'am, that I mean respect, not disrespect?"

"Perfectly! I would like to ask you a question, if you don't mind."

Tower flung himself truculently back in the seat as much as to say he washed his hands of such mat-

ters. The vagabond stepped to the carriage and waited. Moira leaned out. "I am Miss Sander-son," she told him with a blush. "I'd like to do something for all these people here; they're so miserable! What can I do?"

The vagrant, called forth to be spokesman of misery and sin and degradation, raised for the moment to equality with wealth and happiness and compassion, sloughed his rags and bravado as though he were conscious of his ambassadorship for a whole half-world. "For some of us you can do nothing. For the rest, I would say, ma'am, that gin and poverty are their crimes. There is a cure for the first, which would be to shut up these dens. The cure for the second has never been found, ma'am."

"There are so many children here!"

"Ah! if you would only take charge of them!" he said quietly. "The rest of us — well, we aren't children any more. I couldn't ask you to do anything for us. But the children — will you do something for them?"

She was silent. When she spoke it was with decision. "You may trust me." She seemed on the point of saying more. She thought better of it and merely held out her hand. He shook it, bowed and stepped back. The carriage rolled on.

When they were back at the police-station Moira gave the chief a curt order. "Close all those drinking places. Put that man on your force and give him charge of the district. Tell him to put those loafers to work cleaning up the streets. I'll see Mr. Sprengl about paying them."

74 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Towers, obese and flushed, stared at her a moment insolently. "That can't be done in a day, Miss Sanderson. It will take time," he said.

"To-night!" she said briefly. "When you've done that we'll see about the other things."

As she drove off Tower smiled sardonically. To a fat Portuguese lieutenant he made a single remark: "I must see the Old Man about this." He chuckled at the thought of the young woman's discomfiture when she learned, as she must, that her prerogative did not extend to cutting off the honest revenue of faithful officials or the promotion of hoboes to the force.

An hour later Sanderson looked up from his desk at the chief of police and said curtly, "I have nothing to do with the matter. If Miss Sanderson wishes those places closed that is her business. Understand?"

"But —" Tower protested.

Sanderson waved him off and dipped into his papers again.

That night Moira astonished Tua by telling her to dress for the street and call a hack. "I sha'n't use my carriage to-night. I don't want people to know who it is."

Together they drove down to the Reef and at the edge of that disreputable district Moira ordered the driver to wait. She led the remonstrant Tua into the maze of narrow, tortuous streets.

Not a drinking-den was closed. On every hand wretched dance-halls resounded with tin-pot music, ribald laughter crackled under the trees. Women shrieked profanely, drunken loafers shouted amid

the ugly undertone of men bent on inebriate quarrels.
Half an hour's traverse of the streets told her enough.
With face aflame and lips compressed to whiteness
she made good her escape from the inferno and
drove back to the Red House.

Once in her own room she faced her first defeat.

CHAPTER X

A BUSINESS PROPOSITION

HARRY HARDING left the *Spindrift* and found among the crowd a familiar face in that of Percy Williams, whom he had known in New York. After a word of recognition Williams had directed him to a small hotel on the Parade near the pier. A change of clothing, a cool pipe in the shade and a good stretch of his legs along the waterfront prepared him for the business of the day, which was to find some occupation which would immediately replenish his purse.

An hour's trial convinced him that without some credentials he stood little chance among the throng of the unemployed. Two applications, preceded by his card, resulted in a rebuff from a very weary, cross-tempered German whose stores were redolent of cheap calicoes and cheaper shoes, and a stout Portuguese who bluntly told him that he hired none but his own countrymen. Harding determined to see Percy Williams, who had informed him of his position in Sanderson's office.

When he finally found that individual, he explained over a cool drink that he was come to Atua on "spec." The secretary, after a shrewd look at him, was silent a moment. Then he said with great simplicity, "Harding, you won't fit here."

"Why not?"

"Not our sort, my dear fellow. I knew you in New York, you know. You won't fit!"

"You mean?" Harding demanded.

Williams smiled superiorly. "Just what I say. You're trained differently from the men we want here. This is no United States city with three sorts of politics and seven religions. There's only one kind of politics down here — Sanderson's. Religion doesn't count, except among the missionaries. In fact, it's more of a drawback than anything else."

"Saying that all that is true," Harding returned, "I don't see yet why I'm unavailable."

"Take it from me and don't waste your time," was the response. "I know this place. You aren't what we should call 'safe.' The first thing you would do would be to insist on your own way. We don't do business down here as we think 'best.' It doesn't work. One can see in your eye that you're a crank."

"Oh!" Harding ejaculated, enlightened. "You mean I'm honest?"

Williams winked amiably and the subject was dropped. But Harding refused to accept the young man's statement of the case as literally true, though he said nothing more to him about it. He was aware that adventurers in the South Seas prey on each other and he knew that Sanderson was probably robbed right and left — by his own connivance. But he was also sure, from experience, that honesty has its market value everywhere — notoriously where it is a rarity. He gagged at proclaiming himself a man of integrity, but if that was the only course, he would

78 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

see Sanderson himself and advance that argument.

With the forethought of a trained business man, he decided first to have something to say that would instantly strike the ear of the master of Atui. To this end he spent two days in a careful inspection of the city, its streets, improvements and pier. To examine the water-supply he tramped far up the shoulders of the mountain. There he discovered what he hoped to find. When his notes were complete he hired a hack and drove to the Big House.

Williams received him doubtfully. "Of course he'll see you — he sees everybody," he said grudgingly. "But, though I don't know what you're after, I assure you you are wasting time, my dear fellow."

Harding's eyes grew cold. "I'm on business," he said curtly. "You're wasting my time."

The secretary glanced at the card in his hand, muttered and departed. When he came back he merely said: "Go right in. He's busy, but he can let you have a minute."

Sanderson looked up at the sound of the firm, alert step and fixed his eyes on his visitor. Harding bowed slightly to him and deeply to Miss Sanderson, who sat in a chair beside her father.

"I thought you were not engaged," Harding apologised. "I came on business."

"All right," was the reply. "What is it?"

"I'm a trained civil and structural engineer," Harding went on brusquely. "I have examined your city here and I have notes of the amount of money you are spending on worn-out machinery, out-

of-date methods and general waste. For example —”

Sanderson picked up the card again and read it. “Civil and hydraulic engineer,” he said slowly. “All right, Mr. Harding, go ahead with your example.”

“Your electric-light plant,” was the response. “You are turning your dynamos by steam, and coal costs you \$11.40 a ton. Your light and power cost you more than it costs any other city in the world when you might manufacture it as cheaply as any.”

“How?”

“Water-power,” Harding returned as quickly. “I’ve measured the flow and fall of the creek up the South Valley. You have power enough there for a city ten times the size of this.”

“Expense?”

Harding drew a paper from the packet he held in his hand and laid it on the desk. “There are the figures, sir. Also some letters which will show you I am a reputable engineer.”

The papers were received and Sanderson looked up quizzically. “Anything else?”

Harding shook his head. “Not at present, sir. If the electric business doesn’t appeal to you I will bring other matters up.” He took up his hat and was leaving when Moira addressed him.

“Mr. Harding, one moment!”

He faced her politely.

“I take it that you are looking for a position?” she said in a low voice.

Her hesitating words drew her father’s glance upon

80 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

her. "Be careful how you offer jobs around," he warned her.

"Mr. Harding came down on the schooner with me from Suva," she said with a slight blush.

Sanderson folded his lean hands and looked at Harding as much as to say, "I have my eye on you, young man."

Moira went on timidly. "My father has given me Atui to manage. I need some one to help me, some one who is honest and knows how to do things."

"I am honest," was the formal reply.

"It isn't a nice position," she continued doubtfully.

"What is it? I'm certainly looking for something to do."

She made a little face at her father. "It's to be chief of police. I can't stand Mr. Tower!"

"I was never a policeman," Harding answered, smiling. "But I'm willing to try it, if you need me."

"Then will you be my chief of police?" she asked briefly.

"How many over me? Free hand except for your orders?"

Sanderson waved brown fingers. "My daughter is the absolute boss of Atua."

"I accept the job — on trial," was the response.

Moira looked at her father for instructions. He shook his head. "Manage it to suit yourself, my dear. If you don't know how to get one man out of office and another in, I'm not going to show you how."

Promptly Harding interposed. "I've seen the present chief, Miss Sanderson, and I know where his

office is. Just write out an order relieving him of his job and another order appointing me to the place. I'll take them down and I'll see him."

Her gratitude was silently expressed in a glance. Harding offered her a fountain-pen and Sanderson slipped across the desk two sheets of paper. These in hand, she looked at Harding for information as to the phrasing of these two important documents. Without hesitation he reached for the materials and wrote rapidly. When he had finished he handed the two papers to her for signature. She read them over, glanced at her father, who refused approval or disapproval, and then boldly wrote her name twice.

Without a word Harding pocketed his credentials, again picked up his hat and departed.

When he was gone Sanderson chuckled. "Right you are, girl! That's the way to do business! Know anything about this young fellow?"

"Only that he kept his mouth shut during the voyage and didn't bother," she answered. "Also—" she paused an instant—"also he seems educated."

"I wonder what Tower will think now," Sanderson remarked presently.

"I know what he will *do*," was the quick reply.

Her father pursed his lips but said nothing more. By handling the paper that Harding had left with him, he gave her to understand that he was busy. She left, swinging through the doorway in such brisk fashion that Williams, delicately engaged in admiring the splendour of his hosiery, almost tipped forward on his face. She was gone before he could stammer a word.

CHAPTER XI

SERGEANT YAMA

HARDING, his new commission in his pocket, entered the office of the chief of police to find Tower asleep on a lounge in the inner room. A thin Japanese sergeant, bowing low, opined that his superior would be very angry when awakened.

"To much-a gin-dah, misdah!" he explained gently; adding, as if irrepressibly moved to a philosophic generalisation, "Gin no good-ah, misdah!"

"Quite true, Yama," Harding replied. "It certainly is no good-ah, as you excellently remark, for chiefs of police in Atui."

With a quick step to the slumbering man's side he touched him sharply on the chest. Tower roused himself to glare at the intruder. "What the devil do you want?" he demanded hoarsely.

"I have an order here for you from Miss Sander-son," Harding replied quietly. Tower stretched himself, stared at his visitor, looked around the room for something, found it, uncorked it and poured out a stiff half-tumblerful of raw gin. This absorbed, he scowled. "What's that about an order?"

Harding formally presented him with one of the two documents he held and watched with unmoved face the various expressions of astonishment, rage and malignancy that succeeded each other on the deposed official's visage.

"I'll teach her a trick worth two," Tower finally snapped.

He was instantly informed of the contents of the other paper, with the significant statement that the new chief was ready to take charge immediately.

"You'd best wait till I see old Sanderson," Tower fumed, trying to restrain a burst of evil temper.

Harding was on the point of retorting that he had just left Sanderson, but thought better of the impulse, on the ground that Tower would likely make less trouble if he found out the state of affairs for himself. So he kept silent and allowed the cursing ex-official to squeeze himself into his jacket and send for a hack. Having seen him depart, the new chief handed his commission to the Japanese sergeant with orders to post it up.

Within an hour he had run through the documents which told him of the force at his disposal and its disposition throughout the city. He read all the orders and reports on file, summoned the two lieutenants and commanded Sergeant Yama to detail a man to clean out his office. "Especially the bottles," he added.

This done, he saw his subordinates, informed them of the change, directed them to keep their present details and dismissed them. He then called Miss Sanderson on the telephone.

"I'm on the job," he reported. "Now what orders have you in particular?"

She spoke at length with the result that he finally informed her he must come up and see her.

"I understand about that fellow on the Reef you wish put on the force," he added. "I'll look him

84 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

up. But as to the other matters, I think we'd best talk them over together."

"I'll come down," she told him. "Yes, there are so many things!"

"When?" he demanded.

"After supper," came her faint reply. Harding replaced the receiver just as Tower stormed in.

"Look here!" shouted the ex-chief. "You get out of my office!"

Harding's eyes grew stern. "Are you hunting trouble?"

"I'll show the whole lot of you that you can't monkey with me," said the enraged man. "I'll turn Atui upside down. Now you pack up and get!"

Harding pressed the button under his desk. Sergeant Yama appeared. "Arrest this man and lock him up," was the curt order.

There was no hesitation on the sergeant's part. A muttered call brought two big Atuans.

Tower saw that he was helpless. He was about to break out again when his successor said sharply: "Don't use any more language here.—Sergeant, charge him with being drunk and disorderly." He dismissed them with a wave of his hand, closed his desk, reached for his hat and went to supper.

At the hotel he found that news of his elevation had already spread through the town. He brushed aside proffered congratulations and stared his chillest at the hotel-keeper, who plainly intimated that board and lodging would cost a chief of police nothing.

Supper over he lit his pipe and strolled back to the office, contemplating with a thoughtful eye the city and the people whose guardian he had become. It struck him as odd that he had not inquired nor been told the amount of his salary. But he was satisfied. This was better than sweating in a subordinate position on construction-work in Samoa.

He spent half an hour making his white jacket into a very presentable uniform by the addition of insignia ripped from the collar and sleeves of the coat Tower had been forced to resign. After inspecting himself in the glass he nodded to his reflection and settled himself down to wait for Miss Sanderson.

To his disappointment the door opened a few minutes later for Percy Williams.

"I say," said that youth, with an expression of comic bewilderment on his flat face, "what a go!"

Harding glanced at him questioningly.

"I mean old Tower being out and you in."

"'Old Tower' is not out, as you suppose," was the grim reply. "He's in, cooling off."

The secretary gasped. "In a cell?"

"In a cell. So you see he is still in. Want to see him?"

Williams shook his head. "He raised an awful rumpus up at the Big House this afternoon," he went on, seating himself on the edge of a chair. "Came and tried to bulldoze the old man. That's how I found out about your being here. You're a close-mouthed beggar, Harding. Why couldn't you put me wise?"

86 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"I never talk for publication," was the flippant reply. "Now what can I do for you, Mr. Secretary?"

There was a moment's silence. When Williams spoke it was with a diffidence foreign to his usual manner.

"I thought I'd just give you a hint," he said. "You know I told you you'd never fit in here. Maybe I was mistaken. You had a card up your sleeve. But still I feel that a little advice might smooth things along for you."

"Go ahead!" Harding said encouragingly.

"First place, you did wrong to lock Tower up. What if he did talk a little? Perfectly natural, I'm sure. And he has friends."

"He's charged with being disorderly," was the cool response.

Williams nodded, resignedly. "Of course that's done now. I don't expect you to back down. But—I know what lost old Tower his job. One must be diplomatic when dealing with women. I told him that, but he couldn't work the diplomacy. I see you can."

"You flatter me. What are you driving at?"

"That idea of Miss Sanderson's about closing up all the saloons on the Reef," was the sulky reply.

"Never heard of it."

Williams brightened. "Well, you can see for yourself what a mess she made of it. She insisted on going down there where no decent people ever go—it's only working men and such there—and she'd never seen places like that and told Tower to shut 'em up. Tower, like a sensible man, saw he

couldn't really pay any attention to such an order. Like a fool he used no diplomacy."

"I can see you're a born politician."

"Naturally, I don't run wild," Williams assented, feeling on surer ground. "You can see for yourself that some things won't do."

"I certainly see that, and I'll remember what you've told me. Anything else?"

"Just keep your eyes open," was the airy warning. "Take my advice and you'll hold your job."

Sergeant Yama appeared in the doorway, and Harding knew that Moira was come. He dismissed Williams by another door and rose to receive her.

CHAPTER XII

PLANS FOR HAPPINESS

IT is a property of jails and prisons that their mission is not to be mistaken by the most casual eye. The Atui police station differed little from a thousand other buildings used for the same purpose in a thousand cities, though it occupied a part of a building that also housed the court and the treasury. When Moira Sanderson entered Harding's office, he felt the incongruity of the surroundings with her presence. She expressed youth, vitality and ideals, amid bare walls, grated windows and cases of arms. He gave voice to this feeling in his first words:

"You shouldn't have come here. I ought to have gone to your house."

She shook her head, smiling, and lifted her filmy veil. He saw by her eyes that she was warned by some inward purpose, and as he got her a chair he wondered what the next move was to be in her great game; after all, it *was* a game, a contest between an idealistic young woman of little experience and a society inveterately impatient of government and wilfully self-seeking. He could almost imagine himself hearing Tower shouting in his cell at the absurdity of the thing.

Moira seated herself and looked at him a moment before saying simply, "I'm glad I can trust you."

His apparent ignorance of any special basis for this sudden confidence brought a brief flash of amusement into her eyes.

"I heard about Mr. Tower!"

"I hoped you wouldn't be bothered with such things," he returned with a frown.

"I heard it," she murmured, "from Mrs. Mallow."

"Mrs. Mallow!" he echoed, afraid to say any more, recalling Captain Randall's gossiping tongue.

"The lady my father is engaged to marry," she went on quietly. "She feels very kindly towards Mr. Tower."

Harding digested this before replying, "You'd better leave me to deal with him."

"I intend to," she murmured. She seemed to be thinking of Mrs. Mallow. Presently she looked up.

"Mrs. Mallow suggested that Mr. Tower might make trouble for — for some one. I don't wish any trouble caused that — that person, because it would reflect on my attitude, my — my relations with that person, which might very easily be not friendly!"

Harding nodded. "I catch your drift. Say no more. I'll see that Tower makes no trouble for *any one*."

"Thank you," she said, a little wistfully. Then her face cleared.

"Have you been through what they call the Reef?" she inquired.

"I have."

"It is horrible! too awful!" she went on. "I asked Mr. Tower to close all those horrid saloons and dancing places."

"So I have heard. Miss Sanderson, I wish to be

90 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

frank with you. I wish you would be frank with me. I like to work with some definite object ahead. You wish those places shut up: well and good. I shall close them promptly and they'll stay closed. But couldn't you give me some notion of your plans? You have plans? Something more than a mere stopping of a few evils? Some special thing you desire to do with Atui?"

She blushed. "I—I had plans," she admitted. "I came here with my mind set on certain work which would help some people here to be happier, something in the nature of social work such as is being done in many cities. I never expected papa to turn a whole town over to me! My plans were just little ones, things I could do myself."

"And now you must plan for a whole city, from the police force to the treasury. I understand. I see your difficulty. You thought to work with ten people, and now you have twelve thousand on your hands. It's really an enormous responsibility."

"One might stand forgiven for neglecting or injuring ten people, but one's conscience hurts when it's ten thousand," she assented. "And all my plans seem so foolish to me — now."

Harding stared at his desk a while. "Your notion was that you could deal personally with a few people you thought you could help, and nobody would be any the wiser? Was that it?" he suggested.

She was grateful. "Precisely. Now everybody will criticise me, and if I make mistakes, all Atui will make fun of me — and I should die if people laughed at my efforts!"

"What was your idea?"

"To make the Atuans happier," she said slowly. "I spent my childhood here, Mr. Harding. I used to see the misery of the natives and the horrible coarseness of the white folks and the cruelty and drunkenness of the men who worked for my father." Her voice broke a little. "Slaves! I've seen women beaten with bamboo sticks and men kicked into unconsciousness while drunken men laughed. You don't see that any more. But do you ever see a sober man laughing in Atui? Or a decent woman smiling? Look at the wizened girls and the dwarfed young men! At the feeble, middle-aged folks and the wretched old people! Did you ever see an unhappier lot in your life outside the slums of a big city? And here we have a lovely place, a perfect climate and plenty of money for everybody, if it weren't grabbed by a few."

He nodded gravely and she went on, breathlessly, with heightened colour, moving her small hands eagerly.

"And I thought I would come here and show them how to be happy and good. I know what the matter is — nobody ever told them about anything but money, nobody cares whether they are sick or well, good or bad. I know there are no standards of right and wrong. Atui is the same place it was when I was a child, only it's bigger; and instead of clubs they use money to make them toil and slave. Back of it all is the same spirit, the same selfishness which is really barbarity. They are unhappy! Unhappiness always means a central selfishness, and ugly lives come from ugly souls, and ugly lives mean ugly souls in the future. I studied sociology in col-

92 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

lege because I was anxious to find out what made people wretched, and how to cure them. I used to go to the settlements in New York and Philadelphia. I didn't always agree with the methods they used. I—I made a plan of my own. It would sound ridiculous to Mr. Tower and—maybe to you. Because it's so simple! I found that if I was to do the right thing I must be honest. So I tried the first of my plan on myself—and it works!"

"Won't it work wholesale, as well as with a few?" he demanded.

"People will laugh!"

"Are you going to give it up?"

A sudden shuffling of feet on the stone floor of the outer office was followed by loud complaints in a woman's voice. Sergeant Yama entered. After saluting he intoned gravely:

"Atuan lady hit Atuan gent with knife, misdah! Gent very bad hurt, Sah! very dead, Misdah!"

"And the lady?" Harding inquired without a smile.

"No good-ah," was the succinct reply.

"Bring her in," was the order. He turned to Moira. "Maybe you'd rather go?"

She shook her head. "I ought to stay," she murmured. He noticed that she shuddered.

Supported on either side by two stocky policemen a woman stepped through the doorway, her gleaming eyes searching every shadow of the unfamiliar room. Harding waited till the prisoner was within five feet of his desk. He held up his hand.

"Who made the arrest?"

The policemen answered that they had both been

concerned. The woman laughed hysterically while they told of hearing cries, blows, a bitter scream, and then no more. They had found the man dead with a bamboo cane still clutched in his hand. He had been stabbed by the woman he was abusing. The prisoner had a bad reputation. The man was a stranger, from another island, they judged.

Harding leaned forward a minute to settle back satisfied on one point.

"How much gin have you been drinking?" he asked the woman in quiet tones.

"I saw him coming and because I knew he would beat me, I drank that I might have strength to bear the blows," she whined in Atuan, interpreted by a policeman.

When the sordid figure was gone Harding met Moira's wide eyes.

"Do you think your plan would help *her*?" he inquired.

"I — I don't know. It would at least give her a chance."

"If you think so, why not try it?" he went on. "Let people laugh! You just outline your scheme to me and I'll do my part. I guess they won't make too much fun of the chief of police."

"I've never even really told a girl," she murmured, with a shy glance at him. "I *could* do it — well, with one or two victims. I tried it on a girl in college, and made her perfectly contented; though, of course, I never let her know what I was aiming at. She would have been terribly insulted if she'd known! — You said you'd read Professor Blakestone's 'The Will to Live?'"

94 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"I have," he said, inwardly rejoicing at her reference to the days on the *Maitai*.

"I wanted to carry out practically a theory he had. I think he's right, but he never argued it out into the details. It's so easy to make rules and not apply them!"

"I don't know any better way of proving Blakestone never tried to practise his own reasoning than by trying it here," was the hardly encouraging answer. "Isn't he the man who thinks that happiness ought to be equally divided among the community just as socialists think property should be divided?"

"He thinks that no one can be happy unless he or she has a perfectly normal position in his or her community," she replied, primly.

"And that means, being interpreted by you?"

"It means that every girl ought to have a chance, an equal chance with other girls for happiness, for love and for marriage." She laughed softly. "It will sound so funny to you, but it's true! A girl who isn't good looking can't be as happy as the handsome girl, unless she's more than even in some other way. What equal chance has a poor woman with a dowdy figure as compared with the girl with health and beauty? Take an unhappy woman, Mr. Harding, and dress her properly and becomingly, give her a fine complexion, good health and grace, and you've made her contented. Take a young man with a sallow face, spindle arms and thin hair, and you've got a fellow who will sulk and mourn and turn cynic, or else seek pleasure unworthily. It's the poor girl with paper shoes and cheap stockings that is miserable, and it's the fellow unable to compete with his

acquaintances that turns selfish and makes us ashamed of our kind. My plan is simply to put everybody on an equality of health, strength, and manly and womanly attractiveness. A happy community means the same as happy citizens. No person can be any-way near contented in a city where misery is the rule, and no one will be wholly wretched when he has an equal chance in a happy city."

"That means that you can't be cheerful until Atui is joyful," Harding remarked presently. "All right. Now what can I do to make you cheerful? That's what it boils down to, so far as I'm practically concerned."

Moira thought of resenting this rough reduction of altruism to selfishness, but decided to accept it for the time as the price of Harding's assistance. Men were stupid. But at least he did not laugh at her.

"Do you think those saloons on the Reef help anybody to be happy?" she said gently.

"I doubt it. Shall I close them up?"

"Please."

"There is a slight formality to be gone through, first," he cautioned. "How is Atui governed? By ordinances?"

"I don't see the point," she protested.

"This is it: if your word is law, I can shut those dives up by merely telling my men to notify the owners. But if they are licensed, we'll have to fix up the law some way."

"Do you mean to tell me that places like those could be running lawfully?" she demanded with some warmth.

Harding did not answer her directly. "Wait till

96 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

I call up our friend the treasurer," he said. "He'll know all about it."

Within five minutes he hung up the receiver and smiled at her.

"Atui is governed by word of mouth in everything not covered by the French code," he informed her. "Sprengl says the saloons merely pay a quarterly tax into the treasury, but have no footing apart from that. So we shall proceed to close all the dives. I suppose I may leave the orderly places open? Good! Consider that off your mind. What next?"

She got up. "I must go home and write it all out. You've encouraged me enormously, Mr. Harding. And when I have everything plain on paper, I'll ask you to help me work it out."

Harding rose quickly. "Are you sure you're right about the ultimate cause of unhappiness?" he demanded curtly. "I saw the gist of your arguments. But—take yourself, for example, if you'll pardon the reference. You have beauty, wealth and education. You have all the opportunity in the world to make your life what you wish it to be. Is that a sure foundation for bliss and a sure protection against misery?"

"Oh, that's only the beginning!" she returned, smiling brilliantly. "One can't tell a man everything!"

Harding bowed and returned to his desk where he sat for half an hour in deep meditation. At last he started up nervously.

"What a fool I am!" he exclaimed aloud.

"Ye-e-e-s! Misdah!" came the response in the respectful tones of Sergeant Yama.

Harding swung on him wrathfully. "What the deuce do you want?"

The Japanese bowed briskly: "Honourable lady desirous of speak softly to you," he said.

"What lady?" demanded his chief.

The sergeant stepped aside, bowing deeply as a tall, richly dressed woman entered, swinging a gold-filigree hand-bag.

"I am Mrs. Mallew," she said curtly, glancing into the shadow in which Harding stood. "You are the new chief of police?"

Harding stepped forward. "What can I do for you?" he asked, with equal curtness.

She met his cold grey eyes a moment and lost her aplomb. Her hand shook as she arranged her skirts and sat down.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. MALLEW'S SECRET

THOUGH Randall had gossiped and Moira's tone when she spoke of her future stepmother had been significant, Harding had not reckoned on seeing such a woman as now faced him in Mrs. Mallew. He had expected to see a vivacious, coquettish and seductive doll — the typical possessor of that virile youth which entraps old age by wile and witchery. Before this handsome, almost stately woman he unconsciously called on his sharpest faculties. She was unfamiliar to his experience. He stood and waited for her to speak.

Her first words told him that she felt his instinctive antagonism, though the tone she used was light. "You have been in Atui only a short while, Mr. Harding?"

He bowed, and she went on, "I hear that you and Miss Sanderson travelled down from the States together — a pair of new brooms to sweep Atui clean?"

"Miss Sanderson and I happened to be passengers on the same steamer," he replied stiffly. "I had not the honour of her acquaintance then."

She brushed the words aside as immaterial.

"We are always glad of any addition to our little colony," she went on, in a clear, well-bred voice. "This is not the big world, you know!"

He felt the innuendo. Mrs. Mallew was trying to put him and Miss Sanderson in an opposition to Atui in general. He wondered what she and Moira had spoken of when they met. It was plain that Mrs. Mallew meant war. He waited to discover what battle-ground she would choose.

"I have heard a great deal from Mr. Sanderson about his daughter," she continued, looking down at her neatly gloved hands. "We are all so glad to have her with us. It is refreshing to meet some one in Atui who doesn't know all the gossip and small-talk and who speaks and thinks outside of the usual rut we people down here have travelled in so long."

The faint note of restrained impatience in her voice caught his ear. He seated himself and was silent, sure that she must soon come to her point.

"It was so nice of Mr. Sanderson to give her Atui to govern," Mrs. Mallew said, in more sprightly tones. "And we are all so much interested in her succeeding. It's so hard for a stranger to succeed, Mr. Harding!"

"I believe Miss Sanderson was born here, wasn't she?"

"Oh, she left when a mere child! Several of her warmest friends thought some one ought to help her. You know she needs help. But people are naturally bashful. So I just thought I would speak to you, sure that you must be more anxious than any one else that she shouldn't make mistakes."

"What mistakes has she made?" Harding inquired with studied carelessness.

Mrs. Mallew raised her veil, smiling thinly, with

597290 A

100 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

the effect — unknown to her — of making Harding estimate her age at a charming forty.

"That was exactly what I took the liberty of seeing you about," she said. "It's a delicate matter, but of course it couldn't possibly be allowed to go on! Quite impossible, really! Atui, devoted as it is to her, would never stand it!"

"You mean my putting Mr. Tower in a cell to sober up?" he said with disconcerting simplicity.

Mrs. Mallew bit her lip. "Mr. Tower has many friends," she murmured.

"Of whom you are chief?"

She took refuge in anger. "What right have you to question my motives?" she demanded hotly.

Harding made a little bow of apology. "The mere fact that you come here on the plea that you don't want Miss Sanderson's administration to come to grief, and my being her chief of police, naturally makes me try my hand at an analysis of your feelings. I don't mean to be offensive."

"I understand," said Mrs. Mallew, recovering herself. "That is very loyal of you. I see I may speak plainly. I may say that it was at my suggestion that Mr. Sanderson turned this city over to his daughter. Can't you see how anxious I must be for her to succeed and justify my recommendation?"

The change in Harding's manner was instantaneous. He purposely dropped his aloofness, smiled respectfully and said, "Now what can I do for you, Mrs. Mallew?"

Instead of deceiving him she was deceived herself. She breathed a sigh of relief.

"I thought you were never going to wake up,"

she said with a sudden coarsening of her manner which he immediately knew must be assumed. "Honestly, you can pull the longest face ever. Now be a good fellow and let Tower out. He can do you a good turn, chief."

Harding controlled his disgust. She was none the less dangerous because she mistook him for a loose fish like Tower.

"It shall be done," he said promptly. "What next?"

"I'll leave the next for next time," she returned lightly, but with a tinge of scorn for his readiness to swallow her bait.

When she did not rise, in spite of her last words, Harding surmised that Mrs. Mallew was waiting for him to speak, expecting him to deliver himself more openly about his future policy. He could not keep up the illusion that he was a rough and easily handled scamp and contented himself with watching her, not offensively but intently.

Such scrutiny is hardest for a woman to bear. Smiles are not eternal, expressions change from instant to instant no matter what strong will exercises itself, and beauty is more likely to fade before steady eyes than under the passage of years. Mrs. Mallew felt this. Her ready smile hardened, her curved lips stiffened, her shifting eyes refused to flash. She knew that the electric light proved her complexion poor. She began to suspect that she had mistaken her man. He had swallowed the hook too greedily. He had promised to release Tower and take her advice. But this silent pondering and these civil glances were an attack on her inner citadel. She prided her-

102 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

self that her good looks were walls behind which her wits could safely fight. The walls were tumbling. Could she — must she give battle in the open? She was panic-stricken at thought of having fallen into a trap.

Harding, on the other hand, was coming to a flattering conclusion about his visitor. In the first place, she was going to marry Thomas Sanderson. The surrender of the master of Atui to a no longer youthful woman with a past (had she not the fame of an adventuress?) argued in her surprising talents and attractions. Atui's new chief of police, having been once ignominiously vanquished by a woman, was inclined to overestimate the powers of the whole sex. On consideration, he also retracted his estimate of her years as forty. She could claim thirty hard ones. He added to these details small, pretty ears; direct-gazing, steel-blue eyes, long-lashed and set close to a rather heavy nose; red lips over a dull chin; reddish brown hair, and a very slender, graceful neck. Decidedly dangerous! he concluded.

Her eyes especially seized his attention. They seemed almost perfect instruments of an unbending will. He determined to throw off the disguise he had allowed her to thrust upon him. Her natural voice was that of good breeding. Coarse good fellowship sat ill on her. He would meet her fairly. She should not degrade herself again. Her resentment at having to play the rowdy would make her the more dangerous.

"I'm glad you have spoken frankly, Mrs. Mallow," he said in a quiet tone. "You will pardon me if I say that I shall release Mr. Tower because I think

it wise, not because I'm Tower's sort, or want him as an ally. In fact, Miss Sanderson herself asked me to turn him out because — I am very plain-spoken — she feared that he would 'talk,' as we say. You understand that Tower's 'talk' can't injure me. I gathered from Miss Sanderson's remarks that it was another person's feelings she was consulting. Therefore, he is free. On other grounds I agree with you that Miss Sanderson will have many things to learn, as I have myself. I feel sure that she will gladly listen to any recommendations of yours, just as I shall. Why not be frank with her?"

Mrs. Mallew shook her head. He saw the fresh colour ebb and flow on her cheeks.

"I'll leave you to handle Miss Sanderson," she said in a low voice. "You know — a prospective stepmother and a young girl!" Mrs. Mallew rose, holding out her pretty hand. "I'm living in what is known as the Blue House, on the hill," she said amiably. "I have few callers, fewer friends. I'll be glad to see you any afternoon." She laughed faintly. "And I'm so used to having all the news brought me I wish you would satisfy my curiosity once in a while — as much as you can without violating confidences. I'll be rather out of affairs, you know!"

He bowed and she left without a single backward glance.

"Poor woman!" Harding thought kindly. "What a hard business for a creature brought up as a lady! Well, I'll just dip a little deeper into this mud and see whether I don't find hidden treasure." He rang his bell and told an officer to bring in Tower.

104 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

The ex-chief stalked in threateningly, flushed of face and hoarse-voiced. "I'd like you to explain just what you mean by this," he said loudly.

Harding dismissed the jailer and looked up at his predecessor. "Mrs. Mallew has been to see me."

Tower grunted.

"And I told her I would release you," Harding went on.

"Oh, you've seen the light, have you?" was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"Is she the light?"

"Mighty close to it," was the angry response. "And you'll soon see where *you* get off, young fellow."

Harding smiled faintly. "Oh, your business was a mere incident. I had no notion who you were," he said quietly. "Mrs. Mallew and I"—he looked meaningfully at his prisoner—"were talking over old times."

Tower's startled expression was not assumed. He glanced around the room and sucked in his great cheeks. Then he rested his bloodshot eyes on Harding.

"You people had best not get funny with me," he growled. "I can blow this whole business in a minute."

"I can understand that it might be well not to—to get on the wrong side of you," Harding purred.

"She can't throw me over now," was Tower's reply. "I've helped her get where she is. Why on earth she ever allowed Sanderson to bring that girl of his down here I can't understand. I told her it was dangerous."

They were silent a moment, the ex-chief licking his parched lips, his successor deep in study, apparently. Suddenly Tower said harshly, "D'ye think that Mallew woman is clever enough to hold her own with Miss Sanderson?"

"Mrs. Mallew always seems smart enough," Harding murmured.

"She's got a weak point," Tower answered.

"What is it?"

A chuckle preceded the response. "She's soft. Always thinking she can 'get back,' as she calls it. Yearns for a white soul and no past. Only the other day she was telling me in that proud way of hers that she intended to run straight when she married Sanderson. Sanderson's no fool. Unless she holds her own with him, she'll lose out."

Harding's tones were very even as he said, "Mallew? He isn't in on this thing?"

Tower took a few steps back and forth.

"He was — till she dished him. Mallew's a bit of a brute, spite of his being a gentleman and all that. As a matter of fact the woman was all right, till he went wrong in San Francisco himself on their wedding-trip — forged some papers and only got away with it because his family came to the rescue. *She's* never been the same since. Stood by him and all that! Sure! And helped him turn a few tricks after that, too. But Mallew lost his nice touch. This Atui business was too fine for him. I told him he was going to spoil the biggest thing ever. He got her down on him and she just left him out of it. I saw she was right so I —" Tower grinned evilly.

"A chief of police can easily get rid of the undesirables."

"Sure. I shipped him to Sidney. He writes nasty letters once in a while but I've got him shut up. Still, I think I could resurrect old Mallew in time to stop a wedding."

"For heaven's sake, how many people know about this besides us?" Harding broke out in evident anger. "Too many tongues spoil anything."

"Nobody here. Now you and I can work this thing together. You have Miss Sanderson. I'll see that Mrs. Mallew runs the course and there's plenty of pickings. I see your play to put me down. It made you solid with the girl. Then I can see you've met Mallew before. Between us we ought to make her walk a chalk line. When she's Mrs. Sanderson she ought to get us about what we want in Atui."

Harding said nothing for a full minute. Then he addressed Tower curtly: "Come in to-morrow morning, will you?"

"Sure."

"And don't be seen about too much, either. I can't afford it."

Tower winked jovially. "Never fear, old son. I never tipped over a friend's dish yet."

He swaggered out. As soon as he was gone Harding rang for Sergeant Yama.

"I want to talk with you," said his superior. "Close that door."

Yama obeyed and stood at attention while Harding gazed at him with eyes as cold as stars. "Sergeant, you go to the Blue House with a hack and tell Mrs.

Mallew I want to see her right away. Understand? Don't let anybody see either of you."

"Very good-ah, misdah!" said the Japanese, swung on his heel and left.

Harding glanced at his watch. "I do wish I knew what she and Miss Sanderson talked about this afternoon," he muttered to himself. "It would help. But the girl mustn't be mixed up in this."

He held now the key to the situation in Atui. It had been given him by the hand of fate. It was honestly his, and he intended to use it rightfully. First, he would silence the opposition that had already raised itself against Moira Sanderson. This he would do without her knowledge, for she would never understand the windings of this base intrigue. Let her skirts be clean. He would deal himself with Tower and Mallew and Mrs. Mallew. Mrs. Mallew? He thought he saw a way to help her out of the entanglement she was so shamefully in. If she wished to be decent, he would give her a chance — to-night.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNDERSTANDING

WHEN Sergeant Yama ushered Mrs. Mallow into Harding's office for the second time in one evening, that lady had difficulty in concealing her embarrassment. She had at first refused to accompany the policeman. The Japanese had intimated that he could not accept a refusal. Mrs. Mallow had surrendered with as good a grace as she could. She dared not antagonise Harding openly, and she more than suspected that the sergeant's determination that she should go with him was partly a misunderstanding of his orders. Yet she was mortally afraid.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you at this hour," Harding assured her, perceiving from her manner that she felt aggrieved. "But I found that neither of us had been quite frank with the other and I thought there was no time like the present to settle matters."

"Quite so," she murmured, sick with the fear that Tower had "talked."

"I'll be plain," he went on. "I don't believe in discussing affairs with third parties till they are absolutely settled between the interested two. I have seen that you and I are in the dark still as to each other's purposes. So let's get at the facts and speak our minds."

Mrs. Mallew answered his smile with an effort.

"I didn't know I wished anything special," she said in a low voice. "I'm really afraid you laid too much stress on a friendly call." She suddenly opened her fine eyes wide. "What have I to do with affairs?"

Harding waved his hand. "Much," he said briefly.

She allowed the single word to sink into silence.

"I fear I let a compassionate feeling for poor Mr. Tower get me into difficulties," she said presently.

Once more Harding waved his hand as if to brush preliminaries aside.

"Suppose I tell over the facts as I see them?" he suggested.

She bowed her head in assent.

"Before Miss Sanderson arrived and before her father turned Atui over to her, you ran this city through Mr. Tower," he began bluntly. "Tower made several hundreds a month on the side by graft. Now Miss Sanderson runs Atui through me. There is no graft."

Mrs. Mallew opened her eyes wider but said nothing. Her breath came and went a little faster.

"Secondly, you are engaged to marry Mr. Sanderson, who owns this and many other islands; Miss Sanderson has come back not only as her father's daughter, but as his heiress. The plain result is this: you *should* be her enemy."

Mrs. Mallew lifted herself half out of her chair, opened her lips as though to speak passionately, and then relapsed into her seat. She even mustered a smile. "What a preposterous assertion!"

"We must stick to facts if we are to get anywhere," Harding continued sharply. "What's the use of blinking them? We both of us understand that your interests are utterly opposed to Miss Sanderson's. So you, being a wise woman, are going to do everything in your power to discredit her plans, interfere with her work and make her glad to quit Atui."

Mrs. Mallew's face grew cold. "I suppose you understand that you are accusing Mr. Sanderson's fiancée?" she said haughtily.

"I beg your pardon — Mr. Mallew's *wife!*"

Silent minutes passed. Harding sat upright in his chair, waiting for her response to this. Mrs. Mallew's stony face and pallid lips spoke of inward catastrophe. Her eyes seemed to lose their brilliance, her figure its vitality. He saw that she made no attempt to fight him on his own ground. He admired her acceptance of his knowledge of her history and her instant surrender of an untenable position. He sincerely pitied her.

He could not know that in the breast of the woman before him something was dying. That something was her youth, her beautiful, tragic, suffering youth, which had maintained itself in a world of shame and misery, clinging with weakening hands to the illusions of hope, of love, of tenderness, of humanity. It was as if she were watching the departing spirit's grasp relax on the treasures of life. Hope, love, tenderness, humanity slipped away, forever, from dying fingers. She was not only bereaved, but she was the witness of a murder, the assassination of the soul that had still trusted even in the depths. In dis-

honour she had still felt that she was cared for, that the gross and brutal Tower, even, was firm in his friendship. It had helped her to live, this thought that even in the worst and vilest of men there was still a humanity, a concealed tenderness which could not wholly betray or deceive. In that moment she realised that she was wholly solitary in the world. Her final sacrifice, made only to repay the trust men had in her, was useless.

Her words came distinctly, at last, filled with bitterness: "I am to understand that Mr. Tower paid for his release?"

Harding made no sign. She went on, in her clear voice. "I paid him well. I have trusted two men in my life: my husband and Mr. Tower. The first spoiled my girlhood. The second has ruined my woman's attempt to be happy. Mr. Tower always seemed honest towards me, if he was uncouth. I never was in his confidence, but I looked on him almost as a brother, because he never made foolish love to me nor did anything to make me think he was anything but a good friend who knew my history and wanted, crooked as he was, to see me on the straight road. Well, that doesn't interest you, does it?" Her wide eyes rose to his. "But why should I trust you?"

He was silent, not responding to her question by so much as the flicker of an eyelash.

"I am proud," she continued in the same even tone. "I think nothing makes one so full of pride as to lose one's self-respect. You think one ought only to be proud when one advances from honour to honour. But I know what it is to be proud because I

haven't fallen any lower. You are right when you tell me that Miss Sanderson is my enemy. She is trying to take away from me what I've earned by harder effort and deeper pain than she will ever know. She starts life with every hope unspoiled. I'm forced to build my hopes out of despair. I see you know a great deal of my history. What you don't know — can't know — is what it means to become an honest woman after being the wife and the tool of a scoundrel. Married? Of course I'm married. Because I thought I became the wife of a gentleman, I must remain the wife of a drunken villain. Suppose he had died? Would that man Tower have the slightest hold on me to-day — or you? But because my husband — curse the word! — never broke his neck nor caught a fatal disease, I'm sitting here to-night in a police-station, trying — trying —"

She could say no more. Her eyes, dry and brilliant, completed the message of her agony.

Thoughtfully Harding stared at the electric light above him.

"I have always tried to deal with facts as facts," he remarked with all simplicity. "That's why I'm in Atui. It's taken me a dozen years to learn that most people won't look facts in the face. They insist on dealing with theories and catchwords. I really believe that what most people mean by civilisation is an unwritten agreement not to be honest, Mrs. Mallew."

She made no answer and he went on, partly to give her an opportunity to recover herself, partly to relieve his own surcharged mind.

“For example, there is a theory that nobody shall steal. So whether a father steals to feed his child or a tramp his lust, we jail them both. There are as many reasons for a woman’s leaving the right road as there are women that fail — and society gives them all the same punishment. We refuse to spend time to look behind the deed. And when all is said and done, ma’am, we can’t get over the fact that whether you come down the stairs or are thrown out the window, you land on the pavement eventually. Society refuses to deal with the person in the window or on the stairs. It simply sweeps up the bodies on the pavement. But —”

Her eyes met his a moment. She sighed. He leaned forward.

“I’ll sum up my position in a very few words: I’m chief of police in Atui; I’m bound to help Miss Sanderson in her plans so long as I take her pay, and I feel free to serve her so long as I’m in sympathy with her aims. You’ve tried to deflect me, to make me a party to dishonesty. I refuse. I don’t take any credit to myself, for I’m on the stronger side. But —”

Mrs. Mallew’s lips were quivering and Harding hastened on.

“But I’m not Mr. Sanderson’s guardian and I’m not going to interfere with your efforts to re-establish yourself. You mustn’t do it at the expense of Miss Sanderson or her plans. That’s all.”

“You mean?” she breathed.

“I mean you must help Miss Sanderson, not stand in her way.”

114 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

She shook her head. "It can't be done!" she managed to say. "She wouldn't let me and then — Tower!"

"You are afraid of him?"

"I must be — he and Mallew! They will expose me! You don't know their ways! They have kept me in purgatory so long!"

Harding smiled. "That is really what I wanted to tell you," he said. "I'm going to deal with Tower. I don't know what you said to Miss Sanderson that made her think Tower was dangerous. But I'm going to deal with him myself and I promise you he will never bother you again. I had Mr. Tower sized up long ago. I assure you he will vanish from Atui and from your life."

Mrs. Mallew rose and put her hand on the edge of his desk. Her eyes gleamed. "Ah," she said, "so he knows about you, too!"

Harding's amazed look was followed by a fit of laughter. He got to his feet and controlled his features.

"Mrs. Mallew, you never showed your wretchedness so completely as now. It's all right! I'm not offended! Only — cultivate Miss Sanderson and the other side of life. By the way, she will know nothing of this, at all."

Mrs. Mallew drew her veil down over her bitten lip. As she turned away, Harding called gently after her, "One moment, ma'am!"

She stopped, without giving him her face. "What is it?" she whispered.

"Is it Mr. Sanderson, or the respectability he offers you that you want?"

She stood a moment as if stunned. Then she lifted her veil and he caught her magnificent glance of pride.

"We are dealing with facts, as you put it, Mr. Harding. I answer you in kind: I am going now to the Big House to tell Mr. Sanderson my history."

"Ah, you trust him?"

"I trust no man hereafter," she responded. "I trust myself alone."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEAUTY-BUREAUX

A WEEK later Moira Sanderson received her chief of police at the Red House. Warm afternoon was declining into soft evening. The breeze that had slept during the day was wakening and breathing over Atui the heavy scent of flowers and spices. Harding sat on the top step of the porch-flight, holding in his hand the papers on which Moira had set down her plans for the regeneration of the city. She sat opposite him, blushing for the thoughts exposed on the sheets he held.

"Does it sound childish?" she inquired.

He wrinkled his brows, trying to decide. Habitual frankness struggled with a desire to soften his lack of comprehension. "It's not altogether plain to me," he remarked. "I suppose that's because it's all so new to me. I never thought things out in this way."

"It may be merely a woman's mistaken notion," she admitted, hesitatingly. "I intended to do it with just a few, you know. To experiment on a whole city is more than I bargained for. But I feel sure that the principle is right."

"That is, that to be happy people must be well and good-looking," he murmured.

"Exactly! Take any woman; if she has her

health and complexion and knows that she looks her best, she is contented. Isn't that true of men?"

"I doubt whether they would acknowledge it," he answered. "Yet — I suppose it's true to a certain extent."

"Then the only thing to do to make people happy is to see that they are healthy and have good looks," was the triumphant conclusion.

"Granted. I still don't see how you're going to accomplish all that."

She laughed. "Easily! For centuries they've been experimenting on ways to make folks beautiful. And they can! I've known lots of women who were enormously attractive and all by art!"

"Were they happy?"

"Of course! I admit it is harder in New York than in Atui, because everybody here is naturally good-looking. The climate helps. But even in New York I'd prescribe manicures, masseurs, coiffeurs, dressmakers, and tailors for half the evils of the lower classes. A woman's gown is usually more to her than an education."

"A proof of that extraordinary remark?"

Moirá fell instantly serious. "The girls who sell all that is most precious to them for fine clothes and soft hands."

"Money will buy those things," he said practically. "It is expensive business."

"Not very," she returned. "I'm going to make it all municipal. A city manicure-parlour — what a hideous word! I'm going to call it a bureau — a city hair-dresser, a city beauty-bureau! All carefully

118 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

directed on the model of the best. I've already bought some of the things needful to start on."

"Even then it sounds pretty expensive to me," he rejoined. "Have you figured it out?"

"Mr. Sprengl and I went over all the accounts, and he helped me make the estimates. We shall have plenty of money, even omitting the income from those saloons on the Reef that have been closed. Then there's money in the bank!"

"I don't wish to seem to be objecting all the time," Harding said with some embarrassment; "but the only way I can find out at all about this is to ask questions. How are you going to organise these—these beauty-bureaux?"

"I'm going to put up a building specially for them," she told him. "That's part of your work. You can architect, or whatever you call it, can't you?"

"I know something about it," he answered. "Go ahead."

She went for another paper covered with rough plans for the proposed structure. Harding examined it and approved, after one or two emendations. "How soon will you begin this?" he inquired.

"To-morrow. Papa told me we could have the block on the Parade next to the hotel, and he's given us plenty of material to start with. Captain Randall will bring down what we need from Sidney on the schooner."

They discussed the plans till Tua announced supper, and over the table they elaborated details. Harding wished to know whether the plans included the beautification of the workmen on the Reef.

"Most important of all!" Moira exclaimed. "They spoil everything now. I hope not to see a single miserable or dirty or ill-clad person in Atui a year from now."

"But the sick? What about the cripples — and the poor remnants of the smallpox epidemic ten years ago?"

She leaned her elbows on the cloth. "That's the best part of my plan," she said earnestly. "You know that big farm in the South Valley — the place all enclosed with cliffs?"

"Where the waterfall is? I know it."

"I've rented that from papa, houses and all! I'm going to farm it and my work people are going to be the sick, the crippled and the ugly."

"You mean you are going to exile those who don't come up to a certain standard of beauty?" he asked in astonishment.

She nodded her head. "Just that. They must stay there until they're good-looking — at least as good-looking as they can be."

"You're laying out plenty of work for your police force," he jested.

"And all the sick people and people who are unhappy must go there, too," she went on. "When you look at the place again you'll have to confess that it's exactly the situation — pretty, airy, and with plenty of work to occupy their minds. You see we put people in jail for offending against physical laws. I shan't put these folks who disobey my laws about health and dress in prison; but I'm going to separate them from those who do obey. I've decided to call the place Sorry Valley. I'm going to be honest about

120 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

everything and call a spade a spade. So that's Sorry Valley, if you please!"

"How much time will this beauty business take up for each person?" he inquired presently.

She had it figured. "An average of an hour a day. Some folks will have to spend more, some will need less."

"And who is to direct all these bureaus and see that things run smoothly?"

"I shall," she announced resolutely.

"For over ten thousand people!" he ejaculated.

"You'll need lots of subordinates!"

"Lots of 'em," she admitted cheerfully. "I have picked out a few. But I'm puzzled about a doctor. I must have a good one, and a man who will sympathise with my work."

"There's a physician here, isn't there?"

She made a slight grimace. "I was talking to him a day or so since. He said 'Ahum-m!' and, 'Eh-yes-s-!' and told me gin was the only really healthful drink in the tropics. He takes his own prescription."

Later he inquired, "What does your father say to all this?"

"'Go as far as you like,'" she quoted him. "He was quite interested."

"And Mrs. Mallew?"

Her brow clouded. "I don't exactly take to her," she confessed. "She has no ideas but she knows so much!"

"I'm sure she isn't opposed," he remarked.

"Oh, no! She recommended a physician — an English doctor she heard a great deal about in Mel-

bourne. She said he was noted for his devotion to public hygiene. I've written to him."

"Definitely?"

"Only to find out whether he will be willing to come here for five years," she replied. "I'm doing everything on a five-year basis."

"That gives plenty of time!"

She fell into a dreamy silence while he sipped his coffee and went over the figures and notes. She roused herself to say, "I'll love to see Atui five years from now!"

"Everybody good-looking, healthy and happy," he responded. Then, with a sudden frown. "But have you thought of the difficulty of handling the white people here? They think themselves quite personages and I'm afraid they'll rather resent your plan. They may make trouble."

"They must obey," she said firmly. "Even Mr. Sprengl. I told him this morning that if he didn't cheer up I'd have to ship him to Sorry Valley — and he took it as a good joke! I wasn't joking at all!"

"I know one gentleman who will never see Sorry Valley. That's our friend the secretary. Percy is incorrigibly contented with himself."

"He's not dangerous," she said promptly. "No man is easier to handle than a fool who thinks he is wise — except a wise man who thinks he is a fool."

They left the table and sat outside, with the city's lights shining below them. Harding felt at peace with his new world and was content to be silent while Moira talked girlishly of college and Professor Blakestone. It was the first time in years that he had listened to the voice of a woman speaking freely

122 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

and artlessly. For the hour he was taken out of his own narrow thoughts and carried into regions he had never known.

When he got up to leave she told him she intended to start training her first assistants the next day. "Tua is learning to dress hair, and I've found a white girl who can make dresses and really shows remarkable taste."

"And your first victims?" he jested.

"Who do you suppose? Guess!"

He gave it up. She leaned down towards him from the top step. "Mrs. Mallew," she whispered. "I'm going to make her lovely!"

CHAPTER XVI

SORRY VALLEY

MOIRA SANDERSON'S new building rose quickly, thanks to her father's strict training of his workmen and Harding's masterful oversight. During its erection, a period of two months, Atui looked on in bewilderment, for rumour had it that this structure was to mark a departure in the lives of all its citizens. They passed by it with heads turned to scan its long façade and the legend over the great middle doorway,

BUREAUX OF THE CITY OF ATUI

Gossip was further excited by the gradual but unmistakable change in the administration of the police. The closing of the drinking-dens on the Reef had been followed by the restriction of the traffic generally and the incarceration of disorderly folk of whatever degree. Some of Atui's brightest lights discovered at the cost of physical distress that Miss Sanderson's ordinances were not dead letters and that both her chief of police and her judge were inexorable.

Sanitary measures, also, stirred criticism. The streets were rigorously cleaned, private householders

124 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

informed of their delinquencies and the very missionary-school overhauled. The Reverend Nathan Harrow found that the new governor held no brief for religion as against what she considered the public welfare. His complaint to Thomas Sanderson that his daughter's chief of police had ordered him to close his night-classes for children met with a cold reply.

"I don't know why she shut up your school," said Thomas. "But if it's closed I expect she will keep it closed. Have you seen her? I never interfere."

Mr. Harrow had seen her. He repeated what she had said. "She told me that children ought not to study at night," he related. "She seems not to comprehend that the Lord's work stays not for times nor seasons."

Sanderson chuckled for sole answer.

Two days later Lieutenant Morden — the vagrant Moira had met on the Reef and put in charge of that division of the police — brought the missionary into Harding's office. He reported that Mr. Harrow had not only reopened his classes at night, but he had threatened several parents with spiritual penalties if they did not see that their children attended.

To the outraged preacher Harding directed two questions:

"You know the order?"

"A most unjust one," was the unyielding response.

"And you deliberately disobeyed it?"

"I am not bound by heathen laws," was the sturdy answer.

"Appear in court to-morrow morning," said Harding curtly and so dismissed him.

Judge Jourjon glanced down at the reverend defendant next day and inquired whether he had broken the law maliciously. The missionary obstinately averred that it was against his conscience to render obedience to such a regulation, that he served a higher authority than any in Atui.

"I may surmise the pudding from the eating thereof," commented the judge. "Have you carefully pondered the reason for the rule that infants shall not be compelled to go to school after supper?"

"Preposterous!" was the reply.

"A cart is little use without a horse," Jourjon continued, his English having been largely gathered from a carefully cherished "Dictionary of Proverbs" which he considered a compendium of the choicest English and studied assiduously. "The vehicle of the law is drawn, in this case, by the executive arm. Thirty days in jail, Mr. Harrow. A vigilant authority gives sleep to its subjects. Watch and pray, sir, while your scholars slumber."

"Their souls are of greater importance than their bodies!" thundered the missionary, shaking throughout his tall frame with righteous anger.

"A healthy soul in a sound body is the rule," the judge replied. "Do you see to their souls, and we will look out for their bodies." He called the next case, and Mr. Harrow was led away to his new abode.

Harding soon found a particular pleasure in his new work, dealing as it did with varied affairs. His force, weeded of some worthless idlers and cleansed of its taint of graft, responded to his quick, sharp methods of discipline by a loyalty it had never granted Tower. So far as he could, the new chief informed

126 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

his men of the reasons behind the laws they enforced and even, in many cases, gave each officer latitude to deal with petty offences without recourse to the court. A spirit of emulation spread downward from the lieutenants to the newest recruit, not the less keen because the rank and file was composed of a half-dozen nationalities — native Atuans, half-bloods, Portuguese, Japanese, Americans and French.

Harding had one regret — his treatment of the ex-chief. Him he had ruthlessly thrust on board a schooner bound on a six months' cruise among the lower islands and then to San Francisco. It was plain shanghaiing, but the proceeding might be justified on grounds of public policy, he knew. Yet the precedent, once established, had persisted. Many an objectionable character had departed sidently from the Parade without appearing before Judge Jourjon. Harding was unable to rid himself of the fear that the return of one of these exiles would overturn his administration by an exposure of his illegal procedure. However, it was necessary that some one assume a thankless task and he did it for Moira's sake. When all was said and done, where was the strict legality of anything that was being done in Atui? He was compelled to suspect the stability of a government which had to rely on brute force to rid itself of the veriest tramp.

Just before the City Bureaux building was finished, arrived the new doctor from Australia — a tall, brown-haired Scot, the same who had been recommended by Mrs. Mallew.

Harding met him at the pier on the arrival of the little steamer from Sidney, and took him to the Red

House for breakfast, such being Moira's command. Over coffee, toast and avocado-pear salad he learned about his new position, silently digesting the information hurled at him by his young and enthusiastic hostess. The meal over, he broke into speech, quoting largely from British health reports. It soon came out that he was a zealous antagonist of all half-measures.

"The first thing to do, if you are going to make this city up to standard in health and morals, is to insure healthy children," he stated. "The best engineer can't get good work out of a poor machine. The best of mechanics can't make a good machine out of poor materials. Your children are your material for the social machine, and they must be good, the best. Start with the children and within a generation you will have a strong community."

"You shall catch the children young," laughed Moira.

Dr. Maxwell bowed stiffly. "I will keep them young," he affirmed. "But I must go about it in my own way."

Harding left them, promising the doctor the use of the police force, if he needed it.

For the whole forenoon Moira went over her plans and the details of what she was doing. At her manicures, hair-dressers and dressmakers Dr. Maxwell smiled faintly, merely remarking: "First steps in eugenics!"

Her practical measures to protect the children and maintain order where disorder had reigned won a nod of approval. Over Sorry Valley he wagged his head, laughing.

128 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"I'll need special police to enforce that," he told her. "What an original institution! But sick people demand society, ugly people hate themselves, unhappy people hate each other. We must have plenty of police!"

"All the people sent out there must work," Moira said simply. "That will keep them out of mischief."

The doctor chuckled. "You have hit on my own idea: mental disease is as contagious as physical. Therefore the individual afflicted with sorrow or misery should be isolated from his fellows. Excellent!"

She explained her purpose of instituting a strict sanitary inspection of the whole city, to search out every evil, bodily, mental and moral.

"And you must prescribe for each patient just what you think needful," she impressed on him. "If you think a woman needs a new dress, prescribe it."

It appeared that Dr. Maxwell had specially studied dress and the effect of colours. He remarked that various reds were to be used discreetly.

"The mother who would tear in pieces the man who offered a child brandy will dress her infant in crimson," he said. "The alcohol would be less harmful."

"Some people have to wear red because it is becoming," Moira expostulated.

"Anemics," he retorted. "Nature's instinct!"

With a sigh Moira acknowledged to herself that her new physician was a crank.

With Harding afterwards the doctor was reticent. He admitted that Miss Sanderson's plans were extensive. He supposed she was impulsive.

To a direct question he answered, "My dear sir, how can I tell whether she will accomplish all she hopes? All I can say is that she has many good ideas which should have been put into practice long ago. I shall do my best."

"That's enough," said Harding cordially. "I, for one, don't know much about such things. However, she's converted me into belief in her scheme. Atui is already a hundred per cent. better than it was."

"An older or a homelier woman would be helpless," Maxwell said drily.

"She's generous. She wants everybody to be good-looking and happy," Harding insisted.

Maxwell laid a long, delicate finger on Harding's broad chest. "I will tell you now, Mr. Chief, that you will be ill in another month if you don't take more exercise. You are accustomed, I see, to an out-of-doors life. You sit at a desk too much."

"I do feel a bit logy," he admitted. "The heat affects me."

"Eat less and drink nothing but water," the doctor snapped.

"Come on, and I'll install you in your house," was the rejoinder. "It's near mine. Atui supplies all its officials with dwellings. I understand you are unmarried."

"I have never been married," replied the Scot, careful of his English. "Consequently I couldn't have been unmarried."

This sharp correction Harding reported to Moira. She smiled doubtfully. "I *know* I shall have a time to manage him!"

"He thinks your plans admirable," Harding said comfortingly.

"Why fib about it?" she demanded crossly. "He doesn't! He told me I was an idealist, and you know I'm above all things practical."

"He meant a compliment. He's an idealist himself, and proud of it."

She then told him she had mentioned Mrs. Mallew to him as the person who had recommended him. "Mrs. Mallew gave me to understand that she knew him," Moira went on, "and he doesn't know her at all!"

"I'll venture a suggestion," Harding said diffidently. "Mrs. Mallew was likely only one of hundreds of patients, if she was his patient. Anyway, she merely wished to show you she was friendly by recommending a good man. It doesn't follow that she knew him well, or personally at all."

Moira wrinkled her forehead. "I don't see why people don't say exactly what they mean. I took him because I thought he was a friend of hers and it would please her. Now I've got a crank on my hands, and nobody's the better for it."

"Mrs. Mallew will certainly appreciate your taking him on her say-so," he insisted. "And he looks to me like the man for the place."

"Anyway," she responded saucily, "I'm making Mrs. Mallew some new gowns and fixing her up beautifully. Tua is dressing her hair for her."

As they left for a final inspection of Sorry Valley, now ready for occupancy, Harding suggested that they take the doctor along. "I think that a specimen

of your practical work will disabuse him of the notion that you are only a theorist."

"I don't want him to see it now. Let's look at it together first. You won't make fun of it!"

He felt a sudden and prodigious tenderness for her. He vowed to himself that no one should ever laugh at her efforts. To conceal his feelings he growled, "We'll give the doctor a taste of the valley if he gets disagreeable."

Their road wound around the town to the southward, giving vistas of green slopes set with red roofs, of palm-crested hills ranged against the sky, of the blue sea sparkling beyond the pass. At the mouth of a rocky gorge it turned in, rose steeply for a hundred yards and skirted a pool fed by a rapid stream. Then the valley opened out before them.

It was a mile in length and hemmed in on either side by lofty cliffs. At the further end Mount Atui shot up into airy heights.

Within the compass of these barriers lay a score of little cottages, freshly painted, each quite detached from its neighbours and approached only by a separate pathway from the main road. In front of each dwelling was a garden.

Directly beneath the shadow of the mountain rose a large white building, dominating the whole extent of the valley.

"I'm going to have a kind of restaurant there," Moira explained. "Just now I've a little store there to sell provisions and oil. I've put an oil-stove in each kitchen and plenty of dishes for three people. When we have invalids and people who can't cook

for themselves I'll open the restaurant. The overseer and his assistants will live in the main house, too."

They left the carriage and inspected each cottage, Moira taking pains to see that all was exactly as she had planned, from cooking utensils to furniture. Harding marked an omission. "No mirrors!"

"Of course not!" she told him. "They would be fatal. I've put two big public looking-glasses across the stream, one for the men and one for the women."

She laughed at his puzzled expression.

"Don't you see, stupid, that if each person had a private mirror he would be consulting it all the time and seeing how wretched he was? Now the people can only guess how miserable they look and they'll be careful to appear as well as possible before venturing to a public mirror."

He shook his head. "Of course, it's all right, and you know best. But it's too fine a point for me."

"Wait and be enlightened," she counselled him.

An hour's stay satisfied her. As the carriage rolled down the road and out of the valley, she turned to him with a swift, intimate glance. "Do you know, I hope I'll never have to come to Sorry Valley myself! What if, after all, I'd have to come here and live the rest of my days?"

"You'll have company," he replied. "If you come I'll be here. We're either successful together or together we fail."

"How generous you are!" she laughed. She liked him for saying it.

CHAPTER XVII

RULES AND REGULATIONS

THE city bureaus building was formally opened on a fine December day. Thomas Sanderson graced the occasion, grimly complacent. By his side as he walked about the cool corridors and peered into high-ceilinged rooms was Mrs. Mallow, prettily inquisitive and complimentary. Moira had welcomed them at the door, escorted by Harding in full uniform and Dr. Maxwell in a starched white jacket and trousers. On the street, jammed at an early hour by the curious, the police stood on parade, their band playing Atutian airs. The first hour was devoted to an inspection by the authorities and their families and no one was allowed inside except the invited ones. But after the first formalities Moira left her guests to themselves and turned her attention to the multitudinous details still unsettled.

When the general public was admitted they found the building vacant except for policemen stationed here and there to give information. Men, women and children quickly thronged the halls and corridors and overflowed into the room and offices. They gazed curiously at the apparatus, the use of which was a mystery; at the desks, cabinets, shelves, and closets, the contents of which vouched for the seriousness of the business to be transacted here-

134 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

after. Harding, busy on various errands, overheard wondering comments on the inscriptions that adorned the doors: *Bureau of Hygiene, Bureau of Records, Bureau of Personal Appearance, Bureau of Sorry Valley*, and so forth. He saw that these names aroused great curiosity, mingled with ill-concealed amusement, especially among the many white people. Moira had insisted that there be no blinking of the purpose of the various departments. "If it will make a woman happier to have a new gown, she can look for the name on the door and find it. I'm not a bit ashamed of any part of the plan and I intend to be honest about it," she told Dr. Maxwell who had hinted that he objected to being publicly known as the supervisor of a bureau of personal appearance.

The same legends had greatly tickled Thomas Sanderson. He laid a lean finger on the plate that proclaimed *Bureau of Widows and Bachelors*. "The girl will have her hands full!"

Mrs. Mallew blushed. "I see none for widowers."

"The widows will look out for 'em," he answered.

To Dr. Maxwell he offered a strong hand and a word. "I'm glad you approve of all this as a scientist," he remarked.

"Approve?" said the physician. "I'm too busy to approve!" he hurried on.

With Sprengel, Sanderson spent a half-hour, at the conclusion of which he said quietly, "I'll see that the purse doesn't get empty."

The treasurer groaned. "There's money enough, Mr. Sanderson. But she's trying to make me healthy." He expressed despair in every feature.

Percy Williams, debonair and elate, laughed at him. Sprengl scowled. "You're healthy because you're like all other animals. Pooh!" He returned to his accounts.

The same afternoon one of Moira's assistants, a female cousin of Judge Jourjon, capable at the typewriter and of discreet age, posted on the great bulletin-board the new regulations which were to govern the daily life of Atuans. Printed copies were also distributed from house to house, and by nightfall the whole city knew that on the next day would begin the new and startling régime. Harding compressed his lips and squared his shoulders at the laughter, scorn and incredulity to be heard on every hand. These people should find that nothing was absurd that Miss Sanderson decreed.

The proclamation, revised slightly by Judge Jourjon, ran as follows:

BUREAUS OF THE CITY OF ATUI

Be it known that from this date forth all residents of this city and island are required to comply with the following regulations; to-wit:

1. Every resident must be registered at the Bureau of Records within thirty days from this date. Heads of households will be held responsible for the proper registration of all members of their respective families and households.
2. Every resident must report at least once a month at the Bureau of Hygiene for examination and direction.
3. Deaths must be reported within an hour of their occurrence; and the report must be accompanied by a full list of relatives and close friends of the deceased.
4. Illness of over three days' duration, being unnec-

136 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

essary, is forbidden. Serious sickness, disease or injury must be immediately reported to the Bureau of Hygiene, which will see to the removal of the patient to Sorry Valley, where a hospital will be provided.

5. Every female between the age of six and sixty years, and every male between eight and eighty years of age, must report to the Bureau of Personal Appearance once a month for advice and instruction.

6. No person of either sex, under the age of thirty years, shall become engaged to be married, nor shall marry, without first obtaining a license from the director of the Bureau of Social Life.

7. No person of either sex, being over thirty years of age, shall remain single and unmarried for more than one year from this date, without paying to the Bureau of the Treasury a fee of twenty-five dollars a quarter in the case of men and fifty dollars a quarter in the case of women, said fee being a continual tax to be imposed until said person has married.

Provided, That on approved application to the Bureau of Social Life, this penalty may be remitted for a period of not more than one year to date from one year and one day from the date of this proclamation.

8. Widows and widowers of more than one year's standing shall come under the provisions of Section 7.

9. Every resident of this city shall obtain and keep on file at least one copy of these rules.

10. The enforcement of these rules shall be the business of the police, and infringements of any provisions herein shall be prosecuted before the Court of Atui.

MOIRA SANDERSON,
Chief of City Bureaus.

Attest:

FR. JOURJON,
Judge.

— December 14th —

That evening Moira sat in her new office with Harding and Maxwell. Piled high on her desk lay the blank volumes which were to contain the written history of Atui and her experiment. All had been done that could be until the opening of registration in the morning. Her face was prettily flushed with enthusiasm.

Harding frowned over a copy of the proclamation which he held in his hand. "I see you've docked my salary a cool hundred a year," he muttered.

"Over thirty years old?" Maxwell inquired.

"Yes. But what I don't understand, Miss Sander-son, is why you fine the women double what you make the men pay for not getting married. I should think it ought to be the other way round."

Moira's brown eyes glinted mischievously. "My, but you men are foolish! Don't you know that women do all the successful proposing?"

Maxwell smiled sourly. "Heresy!"

"Heresy or not," she responded warmly, "it is true. Many a man must try a half-dozen women before one will have him. Any woman with ordinary good looks and feminine attractions can get herself a husband in six months, if she sets her mind to it."

"A good husband?" demanded Harding.

"The best," she affirmed. "I would just like to see the man who could get away from a woman who once made up her mind to have him! A man hasn't any show at all. You men! Take it from me, a man couldn't marry a deaf, dumb and blind woman unless she wanted him! And she'd get him if he didn't get her!"

"This is serious," Harding remarked mockingly. "I foresee, Maxwell, we shall both of us be married out of hand. We get good salaries, you know!"

Maxwell was silent, pursing his thin lips as much as to say that it was no laughing matter. Moira, with a humorous glance at them, opened the big register. "You gentlemen shall be first," she said, smoothing the virgin page. "Chief Harding, fill out the first line and Dr. Maxwell shall have the second."

Both demurred, insisting that she should christen the book. She assented with a smile. Her pen slowly travelled across the wide sheet. When she had finished Harding scrawled his age, condition, nativity, business, and present occupation. His eye caught what Moira had written under "Business." It was the word *Felicity*. He made no comment. Maxwell was less reticent. He laid his finger on the script. "Felicity, Miss Sanderson? Your business? The greatest in the world, ma'am. I wish you may attain it and keep it."

She blushed and said, almost childishly, "It sounds foolish, I know. But it's true!"

For a diversion — he bitterly resented the doctor's impertinence — he suggested that the next persons to be registered should be Thomas Sanderson and Mrs. Mallew."

"They've promised to come to-morrow," she answered. "Judge Jourjon, too; and Mr. Sprengl. They'll be here early. If we can register four hundred a day we'll be through in a month."

"It's just as well we can't register them any faster," the doctor remarked. "Else we should be

swamped. I doubt whether I can handle more than fifty a day myself."

"Lots of wives and children will be entered by the men," Harding said. "I think ten days should pretty well finish up that part of the work. I hope so."

Maxwell's keen eyes scanned him from head to foot. "Exercise, chief!" he said sternly.

"I *am* tired," Harding admitted. "I'll be all right presently."

Moirá looked at him with serious eyes. "I've been overworking you," she said self-reproachfully. "Of course you must be worn out!"

"I have to do a certain amount of police duty, too," he explained. "That is tiring when I'm more interested in this institution."

She gave him grateful eyes and he squared his shoulders. "I must get to my office and make out the orders for to-morrow," he said. "I'm afraid none of my men will hardly understand their new duties at first. I spoke to Sergeant Yama this evening and when I had done he said cheerfully, 'All right, misdah! I know! S-s-sick man no good-a; go see mis-sah! Dead man, no good-a; tell woman-wife no cry, misdah! All right, sah!' That's his notion of directing the sick and sad to the Bureau and keeping long faces off the street."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE QUESTION OF POVERTY

FOR two weeks the City Bureaux were filled from daylight to dark with Atuans come to register. Each department, under the sharp eyes of the chief and the doctor, had learned its routine and duties. The city was resonant with criticism, mockery, wrath, and amusement. The first feeling of good-natured curiosity about the purported vital change in an easy government had been dispelled by extremely businesslike enforcement of the new laws. Percy Williams, strolling in to write his name and have some sport out of the whole affair, exemplified the outraged feelings of the majority of the Europeans. Loquacious as usual, he surpassed himself in heated description of his experiences.

"I dropped in about ten o'clock, right after breakfast," ran his narrative before Bertha Spinner and her friends over tea. "First off a policeman nearly took me in because I wanted to go right to Miss Sanderson's office. He simply made me go into the recorder's and there I had to write down my full name and a lot of impertinent stuff besides. Then some saucy clerk handed me a slip of paper. Before I could hide the measly thing another policeman grabbed it and herded me into the doctor's office. I never was so insulted in my life. I told Maxwell so,

too. He thumped me and went over my points as if I were a horse for sale. Then he handed me a wretched prescription, and another infamous policeman insisted on driving me into a bureau of personal appearance."

Here the secretary's narrative became broken. It appeared that in this chamber of torture a cold-eyed fish of a woman had informed him that he looked fat and flabby, that his hair was untidy and his necktie most unbecoming. "She even told me to quit smoking if I didn't wish to be decidedly disagreeable to ladies," cried the wretched William. He also let it out that an early application to the Bureau of Social Life for a one year's respite from marriage had been marked "Disapproved." He had had to pay twenty-five dollars in advance and considered himself injured because, if he had not made an application he would have been free of charges for three months. He proclaimed that the whole thing was a miserable failure and that he would never enter the City Bureaux again and should totally ignore the rules and regulations thereby laid down.

Lucretia Mason, whose missionary father had turned planter, with notable increase of worldly goods, was sure that Miss Sanderson was riding for a fall. "Papa says one has to conform to society's rules to a certain degree," she remarked. "I am sure that this City Bureaux is entirely uncalled for. It might almost be taken as an insult."

"Moirá wouldn't bother her head about *that*," put in Miss Spinner. "She would merely say she didn't mean it that way and you'd have to believe her. The mistake she's made is mixing up what's good for the

142 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

natives and working people with what might do for us."

"Well," said Miss Mason, "all that I can say is that I shan't wear a light blue dress." She smoothed her black hair with one white hand and looked defiant.

Bertha Spinner stared at her. "Do you mean to tell me that doctor had the impudence to tell you to wear baby-blue?"

"What did he tell you?" was the pert demand.

"I'm an ash blonde," Bertha Spinner sniffed. "He told me I should wear scarlet for 'stimulus.'"

"I was awfully rude to him," her friend confessed. "And when I'd really talked horribly to him he brought up the blue-dress idea. Said I need the soothing effect of it!"

They both laughed. "And it's too bad he's such a fool, for he looks nice, and nice men are so scarce in Atui!" concluded Miss Spinner. "I'm going to see Moira and tell her a few things!"

Moira was glad to see her old playmate, discerned that she was hostilely inclined and promptly carried her off to the Red House for tea. "We'll have an hour to talk over old times," she said.

Bertha Spinner was not to be cajoled. She came instantly to the point by stating without reservation that Moira was "killing herself in Atui."

"How?" was the unruffled query.

"By your preposterous City Bureaux!" exclaimed Bertha, fanning herself vigorously. "I was insulted and I know none of the other girls will stand it."

"How were you insulted?"

"That native woman of yours said my figure was all wrong," was the acid reply.

"I notice you're getting fleshy," Moira answered calmly. "My dear Bertha, you know it!"

"But it's nobody's business!" was the almost tearful protest.

"That's what I thought at college when they started in on me," was the smiling reply. "I was mad as hops!"

Bertha, whose schooling had been limited to a year in Sidney, had, most unwillingly, to respect a Bryn Mawr precedent. But she pouted. Moira dashingly related her own trials and concluded, "But we all learned that a good figure means a lot! You'll be amazed how much friskier you feel when you lose that flesh."

Vanquished at this point, Bertha complained of the publicity of the thing. Moira reassured her. "Even I wouldn't have known what had been prescribed for you if you hadn't told me. We work by carefully adjusted charts that indicate proper measurements. My goodness, Bertha, be sensible and help me. I know if you'll only back me up you'll do a world of good and"—she winked over her cup—"we'll have larks!" She related what Percy Williams had told the town.

"He's an owl," Bertha said promptly. "I'd like to have a chance to tell him a few things!"

After tea they went down-town again. Set down at her own door-step, Bertha smiled at her hostess. "Moira, where do you get your complexion?"

"It's a secret," was the response in a whisper.

"But the City Bureaux shall have it. You shall have it first. Come to-morrow and I'll tell you."

"You're a duck! Drop in to tea any afternoon. Do!"

"I will. May I bring Dr. Maxwell?"

"Of course!"

They waved fair hands to each other as the carriage drove off.

Back at her desk Moira found a pale young clerk, evidently much perturbed. In his hand he held a prescription-blank filled out by Dr. Maxwell. "I'm John White," he told her nervously. "I work out on the Leeward Plantation in the office. I came here to register, and when the doctor examined me he gave me this paper. Nobody seems to understand it."

Moira took the paper, nodding to him to sit down. Having read it twice she rang the bell and sent a messenger for Dr. Maxwell. Directing her visitor to excuse her a moment, she went into her private office.

Dr. Maxwell entered, aproned and brisk. "What is it?" he demanded.

"A puzzled young gentleman can't get this prescription filled," she informed him.

The doctor glanced at it. "I remember the case. That's the solitary thing that will do him any good."

She read the words aloud: "*Silver and gold quantum suff.*"

"Money," explained the doctor.

"Money! That isn't a prescription!"

Maxwell grunted. "You send people to me and I'm to diagnose their trouble, if they have any. This fellow comes in looking a death's-head. He's nerv-

ous, half-crazed, liver out of order, eyes failing, digestion poor. Drugs? No! A thousand dollars' worth wouldn't help him. I find he's got a wife, debts and five children. Worry is his disease. Relieve him from debt and his nerves will settle, his wits clear up, his liver recover its tone, his sight improve, and his stomach do its duty. I'm a physician. Therefore I prescribe the one thing that will cure his ailment — money."

"Five children!" said Moira. "And poor! He has no business having such a large family. That's just like poor people! He's in debt? He ought to be ashamed of himself!"

"Exactly," said the doctor curtly. "It's an odd thing that poor people always have the most expensive luxury there is: babies. If this young — er — White had put the five hundred dollars the five cost him in the bank, he wouldn't be in debt. Children aren't an investment; they're a speculation. But when a man's sick the doctor tries to cure him, not to convince him he's been a fool. Therefore I prescribe money."

Moira stamped her foot. "This isn't a charitable institute," she said crossly. "Why doesn't he make more money?"

For the first time since he had landed in Atui Dr. Maxwell laughed outright. He seemed to be relieved by this explosion and said to his angry chief: "I must have an assistant to check up my books and keep my files. Let me have him at a hundred a month, Miss Sanderson."

"Oh, well, he's fixed, then. That's different from giving him money. We couldn't do that, you know."

But when the doctor was gone, with his new assistant after him, Moira still frowned over the affair. A new problem had presented itself, the terrifying problem of poverty. John White exemplified in his bloodless person a thing that threatened the whole structure of her elaborate plan to promote happiness.

She could not think in her office, with all its distractions, so she put on her hat, gave orders that she was not to be disturbed by telephone-calls and went quickly home. She must instantly find a remedy for cases such as this clerk's; and that remedy must fit in with her present schemes and be consonant with what Professor Blakestone termed the "inexorable unwritten laws of political economy."

The girl of twenty-two sat down on the porch of the Red House to solve the question of the centuries.

Now why had instinct failed to point out that poverty was the cause of much unhappiness? Why was it that a certain hitherto unknown John White had to present to her official vision a wrecked physique, a wife, five children, and a load of debt, in order to teach her what instinct should long ago have cried aloud?

One thing flattered her pride: while Dr. Maxwell had begged the whole question by merely giving White a better job, she had seen deeper. The clerk represented a general problem which, once solved, would not only cure John White's nerves, but reinstate in health and contentment all the thousands of John Whites who must exist. She felt that Dr. Maxwell lacked a real faculty for promoting human happiness.

So, for the moment, she discharged her mind of

John White and considered poverty in the abstract. She was to discover that abstract thinking is a dangerous pastime.

Without trying to indicate the many by-paths into which she strayed while considering Poverty with the capital initial, it may be said that she landed on the horns of this dilemma: Happiness depends on good health. Poverty means bad health. People in bad health ought to be made well. Money will cure poverty. To give a poor man money is to make him a beggar. Beggars are unhappy.

Having got this far she went in, had a cup of tea and brushed her hair. Much refreshed, she returned to the case of the individual John White. By chance he was provided for. But what if there had been no better job for him? Would he have had to suffer along, finally to die, leaving wife and children destitute? After trying to figure out how it was that the innocent children must suffer, she found that she had conceived an undying hatred of poor John White. "I do wish he had never been born!" she said to herself. Properly scandalised by this outburst she went in to supper. After that meal she called up the chief of police. Not getting him, she rang up Judge Jourjon and asked him to come up and see her.

The judge arrived, delicately concerned. She reassured him, seated him in a comfortable chair and put the case of John White. "You see it might spoil everything!" she told him.

The judge listened gravely, white finger-tips together. When she was done he said, "Why worry further? John White is provided for. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. There is always a

148 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

night before to-morrow. Why cross the bridge before you get to the river?"

She was in no mood for proverbs. "But there are others — hundreds of others! Lots of people are poor!" she cried.

"True. There is no corner without a poor man around it. A thin shirt is as bad as a cold wind. I see your point. A sore thumb makes a useless hand. Poverty is the thumb that weakens the hand of the City Bureaux. But — we all must die. I shall die. I am waiting. I do not worry about it now. Do not worry, my dear friend!"

She looked at him, at his dark head neatly brushed, at his quick, shrewd, kind eyes. He met her gaze frankly and courteously. "You would cut off the injured thumb — you would expel all miserable poverty from the world," he murmured.

"From Atui," she corrected him.

"From Atui, ma'am. It is noble of you. But is it necessary?"

She gave him her startled eyes. "Necessary! to get rid of all horrible things? Why, Judge Jourjon!"

He waved a white hand. "Miss Sanderson, I sympathise profoundly with you in your effort to make this city a happy place. Permit me to assert that I believe you will succeed. But to do away with poverty — that is not needful."

"I know exactly what you are going to say," she interrupted, hastily. "I know about having the poor always with us and that sort of thing. I don't accept it!"

Jourjon's eyes darkened. "Dear lady," he said

gently. "You have explained yourself brilliantly. I am a man of some years and much experience. Will you permit me? I shall tell you something you have not yet discovered."

She leaned forward prettily. "Do tell me!"

"Ah! you do not take my words seriously. You shall! You are not a philosopher, you are a soul in prison."

She drew her forehead into a frown. "Is that a compliment?" she asked shortly.

"I do not compliment people on their souls," said the judge stiffly. "All souls are equal. I am explaining."

She had hurt him and apologised frankly.

"A philosopher," Jourjon went on with a bow, "deals with facts. He does not try to change facts, which is the privilege of God. He only tries to arrange his life so that facts will neither injure him nor hurt his fellow souls. Poverty is a fact. Even Miss Sanderson cannot expel poverty from Atui. Therefore, you chafe, you rage, you strive to alter a fact. So I say you are not a philosopher. You are simply a soul in prison."

"Must we stay in prison?" she murmured presently. Then, "But John White isn't poor any more! Where is your argument?"

"Your instinct told you that the remedy was an accident and does not help other John Whites," he remarked. "Will you permit me to suggest?"

"Gladly!"

"You should have made John White contented with his poverty."

She was repelled. "A slave, in other words!"

"A free man, my dear lady," Jourjon replied mildly. "In debt let him learn to be happy through the consciousness that he has done his best. If the debt be not his fault, why does he blame himself? If it is his fault, why shouldn't he be taught his weakness? So many people think a thousand dollars would mean bliss! Experience tells us that there is not wealth enough in the whole world to make one man content."

"Then what would you do with the John Whites?" she demanded.

"You have struck on the remedy," was the reply. "You showed him that his welfare and your own happiness were one thing, bound up together. Miss Sanderson cannot be contented while John White is miserable. If every man, dear lady, would understand that so long as his brother is unhappy he himself must suffer, we would find the golden rule of life. But — I would warn you. You are the governor of Atui. The most fatal thing a government may do is to raise questions to which it has not the answer. The secret of authority is to make your subjects contented with their present lot."

She pondered this, elbows on her knees, puckering her forehead. The judge watched her calmly. At last she raised her head. "I see. If I try to make all the women pretty as I am, all children as healthy and carefree as I seem to be, all men as much masters of themselves as I, then we all are happy together."

"You have become a philosopher."

"A makeshift, after all!" she sighed. "What I would like is perfection!"

"That is the outcome of infinite attempts to arrive

at it," he answered, rising. "And here in Atui, ma'am, we have a freedom we should cherish. We are a community apart from the world, able to conduct our own affairs and satisfy our own sense of justice and right." His eyes shone with enthusiasm. "To arrive at ideal standards of right and wrong among twelve thousand people is our privilege to attempt. I am very happy to be judge of the Court of Atui."

She held out her hand. "I'm glad John White turned up as he did. He's made so many things plain!"

CHAPTER XIX

HARDING LOSES HIS JOB

FOR three months the City Bureaux had been in operation, and so occupied had Moira been with her new duties that she had found little opportunity to speak with her father. On each occasion of their meeting he had shown himself taciturn, giving her an impression of coldness and indifference to her activities so long as they opposed neither his plans nor his comforts.

A hard day's work, made doubly difficult by having to deal with a serious situation at Sorry Valley, had left her discouraged and almost in despair. Sitting at her desk after all the rest had gone, she leaned her head on her hand and thought over the events of the period from her leaving college to Harding's words an hour ago. After a brief report of what he had done in Sorry Valley, her chief of police had dropped the rather stiff, businesslike tone he lately employed in his communications to say: "Miss Sanderson, you simply can't carry all these burdens on your own shoulders. You've got to trust some of us more than you do. Make the rules and give the orders. We'll see that they are obeyed."

Without thinking she had answered, "I'm so tired of always looking happy!"

"So am I!" he had replied, with an undertone

that frightened her, so expressive was it of a determination she felt too feeble to battle with. Was he going to either act independently or abandon her? Was he going either to play the master or cease to be her chief adjutant? She felt that without his freely-given and never-failing help and strength she could scarcely go a step further. But she could not have him insubordinate nor allow him to suppose that anything could be done without her specific sanction and under her personal observation. The very indignity of being dependent on one man's loyalty brought tears of vexation to her eyes. And he had departed without a word to reassure her.

In this hour she turned to her father. She called him over the telephone and asked him whether he had had his supper.

"Then come and have it with me. . . . I want to get better acquainted," she said.

Having his promise she called up Tua and gave orders for an especially good meal. On her way home she stopped to buy cigars and a bottle of wine. Then she hurried to dress herself as prettily as possible.

Sanderson found himself greeted warmly and set down to a very good supper. His usually saturnine countenance reflected a little of his daughter's amiability. He ate heartily.

"Everything going all right?" he inquired over his last glass of wine.

She nodded. "I didn't bring you here to tell you my troubles. I was tired, and thought a nice visit would do us both good."

"I supposed you were too busy to pay much atten-

tion to your old father," he remarked. She saw that he had really been hurt by her neglect. He added, "You've not been around to your own home, either."

"I—I thought you'd rather I'd not," she murmured, surprised.

"Why should I 'rather not'?" he demanded.

Though he was her father she felt no easiness with him, and she had decided that her daughterly affection was of a pale variety. Also, she had not considered him in the light of a fond parent. She could not forget her reception after a twelve years' absence. This demand for intimacy made her more reserved than ever, especially since her reasons for not going to the Big House concerned Mrs. Mallew. She spoke the name before she could check her tongue.

"I thought so," said Sanderson gloomily. His lean, brown face showed hard lines.

"I—I didn't mean to say anything out of the way," Moira hastily corrected herself. "I like Mrs. Mallew, and she has been very friendly to me."

"Would you like her—I take it you mean you consider her a human being—if she hadn't been friendly to you?"

"You're angry with me," she said, flushing.

"We might as well get acquainted, as you put it," he went on. "Usually I let people find out for themselves just what sort of a man Thomas Sanderson is. I pay other folks the compliment of thinking they act as I do. For instance, did I demand all your reasons, or demand details before I turned Atui over to you?"

"No. And I couldn't understand it."

"I treated you the way I expect to be treated myself. I take people at their face value. If I find they aren't what they appear, I alter my attitude. That's all. Every man has a right to be himself."

"And women?"

"Certainly. Let's not talk wildly. We are speaking of Mrs. Mallew. She came to Atui some time ago. I met her and saw that she wished to be taken as a lady looking for a home. Did I ask her why and wherefore? I did not. I simply accepted her as she appeared to me. I became engaged to her. She made me less lonely and she didn't ask *me* about *my* history. She didn't want to know how many children I had nor how much money I was worth nor whether I would quit smoking and sipping gin for her sake. She didn't declare for new curtains, a honeymoon in the States, nor a carriage. She didn't even ask about my religion. She simply said she would marry me."

Moira kept her eyes fixed on her plate, much like a child who is being scolded. Her father went on, quite coldly.

"It wasn't till a few weeks ago that she told me she had a husband still living."

"Then you aren't going — you won't marry her?" she cried. "You *can't* marry her! She's only an adventuress!"

"I have already told you that I take people at their own estimate," he pursued evenly. "If she has a husband now, she had one when I found that I wished her to be my wife. To be frank, I cared very little whether she had a husband living or not, so long as

she preferred me. So we are waiting now till she gets her divorce."

"I can never meet her again!" said Moira, disgustedly.

Sanderson allowed himself a constrained smile. "It seems that Mallew is a thief, a liar, and beat her."

"That's what she would say, of course!" Moira was flushed.

"It happens that she has *not* said it," he retorted. "I found it out for myself."

His daughter looked at him pleadingly. "Papa, it's such a serious step to get married! How do you know she's not deceiving you? If she didn't say anything at first, and kept you in the dark, isn't she simply fooling you this time?"

"My dear girl, it happened that I knew all about her before she told me a bit of her history. It came to my ears by accident that Mallew was alive."

"And you didn't—"

"If she considered herself free, what business was it of mine?" he said inexorably. "Must I tell you again that I take people as they are, not as I think they ought to be? I happen even to know why she finally confessed. It was because your chief of police knew of Mallew's existence."

"*Harding!*" she exclaimed. "He never said a word to us."

"I have a respect for Harding," was his sole comment.

Moira rose and walked to the open door. There she stood in silence, filled with anger and wretchedness. The one person in Atui on whom she depended

was disloyal. She had trusted Harding and he had concealed from her a thing vitally concerning her happiness and that of her father. He had allowed her to be friendly with a false-hearted adventuress!

"I'll never have faith in anybody again!" she said intensely.

Sanderson lit a cigar.

"You are young, my dear," he remarked gently. "Only twenty-three, aren't you? You start in on a scheme to reform a whole city. You — well, you succeed, after a fashion. I'll say that much. I like Atui myself better than I did. You have shown more capacity than I gave you credit for. But because a man doesn't rush in to tell you that your future stepmother can't marry your father because she already has a husband, you storm about and swear that you'll never trust anybody again."

He was startled at the expression of the face she turned to him. Her brilliant eyes met his sharply.

"You needn't impress your notions on me any more," she said coldly. "I'm young, of course. I have been a fool. But I'm able to stand alone. All I asked of him was a decent loyalty to me. I gave Mr. Harding his job. I gave him my confidence, and he betrayed it. I might have known that Mrs. Mallew would get around him just as she got around you. All right, father! If I've got to stand alone, I shall. I see that my scheme doesn't appeal to you nor to Mrs. Mallew nor to Mr. Harding. I believe in my plans and I'm going to prove that I'm right in spite of you all."

"Going to make us all happy in spite of our-

selves?" he mumbled with his cigar cocked between his lips.

She ignored his sarcasm and went to the telephone. He heard her ask for the chief of police and listened calmly to her statement that she must see him at once. Then he got up, holding out his hand.

"I'd like to hear what that young man will say for himself," he said quietly. "And remember one thing, Moira: you've got Atui on your hands for five years yet. It's up to you. You can't throw cities and governments around like old frocks. So be careful what you do."

She did not respond to his smile and saw him depart without more than a perfunctory good night. Then she went before the mirror, brushed her hair, patted her skirt down and breathed deeply several times. Thus she prepared to receive her chief of police.

He came, evidently just risen from supper. With involuntary approval she glanced at his clean-shaven face, strong figure and keen eyes. But her tones were colourless while she asked him to sit down and smoke if he wished.

He thanked her. "I didn't wait to smoke before coming," he said. "I thought from your voice you were in a hurry."

"I am," she answered, seating herself on the other side of the table, which Tua was clearing off. "I found out something that puzzles me. It may not seem serious to you, but to me it is very important, because it shows that I have been deceived."

Harding smiled reassuringly. "By whom?"

"By you," she said as firmly as she could.

He merely grunted.

"I've trusted you so completely!" she stammered, trying to keep back the tears.

Harding went to the doorway and threw out his cigar. "Is it so serious as all that?" he inquired with great concern. "Look here, you're talking to a man. Don't be bashful! Speak out!"

She took refuge in anger. "Why did you deceive me about Mrs. Mallow?"

"I'm not aware that I did," he answered.

"Oh!" she gasped, half choked. "I might have known that she would twist you around her little finger as she did my father, and all the other men here."

"Please explain," he said in a tone new to her.

"You knew she had a husband living, and never told me, though you knew she was my enemy and was trying to marry my father under false pretences."

"I didn't — and don't — consider it any of your business or mine," he said promptly.

"It certainly was my business!" was her outraged answer. "Do you suppose I want my father to fall into the hands of an adventuress?"

"She told your father, I believe," he remarked.

She smiled witheringly. "I thought I should find a conspiracy, and I do. Are you aware that I have trusted you, Mr. Harding?"

"Miss Sanderson, your trust in me depended wholly whether you should, as you put it, 'find me out,'" he said, his face very red. "I hoped that you really had confidence in me, yet I knew enough

from my experience with women to be sure that what faith you had in me was only a kind of probation. I ought to have known better than to allow myself to parade in your eyes as a devoted slave. As a matter of fact, I *have* been devoted to your interests, even when I thought you were going at things the wrong way. You see,"—he smiled at last—"I was sure you meant the best in the world!"

"You won't have to sacrifice your—your convictions any longer," she said, rising. "I'm sorry to have put us both in a false position."

"Be frank, Miss Sanderson!" he returned, getting to his feet also. "Do you mean that you won't have me any longer as your chief of police?"

"I must have some one loyal to me," she answered with a primness that annoyed her, desirous as she was of being dignified.

"All right," he said, apparently unconcerned. "I'll be ready to turn over the office any time my successor presents his credentials from you."

She resumed her haughtiness. "Of course, if there is any other position I can offer you at any time, I should be glad to give it to you," she told him.

He did not smile. "That's very good of you! Thank you! Good night!"

When he was gone Moira stood in the doorway, breathing the scented air into her starving lungs. The strains of some far away band floated up from the city, speaking of life, of laughter and gaiety. She felt alone in an alien world.

CHAPTER XX

"I SHALL WAIT"

THE exercise of autocratic power has its penalties. Moira had dismissed one subordinate — her main reliance — and she felt that no time must elapse before the choosing of a new chief of police. To show the slightest weakness or hesitation was to undo, to spoil the effect of her prompt action. She felt that she had driven Harding into the opposition. True, he had been secretly sympathetic with Mrs. Mallow for months, that she knew. But he was not the man, she thought, to count as negligible. She must immediately find some one to take his place before any attempt could be made to weaken the authority she had built up. Whom was she to choose as her lieutenant?

With deep chagrin she realised that she should have decided on a successor before dismissing Harding. But she had fully believed that he would either excuse himself or pray for mercy; if he had done either she would have kept him, chastened and doubly ardent in her service. Instead of that he had almost demanded his release from office. She was very angry with him.

She went over the list of possible chiefs of police. Dr. Maxwell was too valuable in his present place. Judge Jourjon could not be spared from the court.

A dozen others lacked in one way or another, or were indispensable where they were. Midnight found her desperate. She was on the point of sending for Harding again in hopes of his bending his stiff knees and giving her opportunity to recall her dismissal. Pride forbade her.

Finally she picked out the man, the most unlikely of all the candidates. When reason and logic ceased to serve her she shamelessly fell back on her feminine instinct for the man who would be absolutely her creature. She chose Percy Williams, most pliant of instruments. He was now a hanger-on of Mrs. Mallew; but Moira had no doubts of her ability to attach him firmly to her own interests. Before she retired she wrote out his commission.

Her sleep was the profound unconsciousness that follows the relaxing of great mental strain. She awoke at dawn, drank her chocolate, dressed and sent her carriage for Percy Williams, ordering the driver to wait for him if he were not up. She was of two minds whether to call up her father and ask whether he could spare his secretary, but decided that that part of the day's work might as well be done by the new chief himself.

She realised that her handling of Williams must be different from her quiet acceptance of Harding's service. The young fop, the careless man about town, as the secretary assumed to be, must be coaxed and flattered,—a repugnant prospect! Only devotion to a chosen cause could have brought her to it.

He arrived as fresh-looking as a morning glory, thereby testifying to good habits and a clear conscience. "Breakfast?" he repeated after her.

"Say, I'm glad I feel strong this morning. I thought you were never going to ask me to call again!"

"I need you," she said simply.

"All the more complimented," he averred, his pale eyes approving her gown. She flushed and plunged into business.

"Mr. Williams, I'm in difficulties. You know, of course, that I am kept very busy."

He nodded. "I should say so!"

"Everything is going on very successfully," she pursued, a trifle loftily. "But at this juncture I need some one I can absolutely depend on, some one who has no outside interests to take his mind from the work I want done."

He waved his napkin. "Count on me," he said airily.

She mustered a smile. "It's you. I've been a little disappointed in some of my assistants and I find I must make some changes. I need — I need — well, I must have some one who understands Atui pretty thoroughly. Really, a work such as I am interested in needs a certain amount of sympathetic co-operation on the part of the city, and I know you're perfectly at home in all circles here. You can be the diplomat as well as the iron hand. I know I can trust you, too."

Though doubly flattered the secretary said nothing but devoted himself to his plate. She saw that he was too shrewd to commit himself too far.

"Some misunderstandings have arisen, as you know," she went on, hurriedly. "They must be removed. I have picked you out as the man who can greatly help me."

164 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Williams laid down his fork and smiled. "Look here, Miss Sanderson, I'm pretty wise. I never hunt trouble. I'm the original boy who's around the corner and doesn't see the row. I'll tell you the truth. I'm ambitious. I'm tired of being merely a secretary. If you need me, and have a place for me where I can get along and do real work and not be only the office boy, I'm your man. I'm frank — easy-going but always frank. I like you. I like the way you go at things. Of course, it's been none of my business. I'm an outsider. I'm Mr. Sanderson's secretary. I'm not taking sides, if there are any sides to take, so long as I hold my present job. Pleasant to everybody is my motto. Friendliness is what I practice. But —"

Almost inaudibly she repeated, "But —?"

"But I'm with you if you give me a fair show."

"A fair show for what?" she inquired, recovering herself.

"To travel with the others. I've been the under dog too long. Not that I'm not easy to get along with. I don't kick while I'm waiting for my opportunity. Now — have you anything for me in the self-respecting line?"

She considered this. She perceived that he was fighting for recognition, for some good ground on which to stand and say: "You have to count on me." Was he equal to the task she had for him? Was she mistaken in the weakness of his character? Could she wholly manage him? But she had gone too far. She spoke out:

"I want you for my chief of police."

Without an instant's hesitation he rose from the

table, procured his hat and stick and bowed formally before her. "When do I get the place?"

She smiled in relief that the moment of decision was over. "This morning. Mr. Harding has resigned. I have your commission all made out. He'll turn the office over to you. I suppose you will have to speak to my father first."

"Fair is fair," he responded promptly. "Old Harding may want *my* job. I'll tell him it's vacant before I tell your father. That way he'll have a chance at it if he wants it."

"I wish everything to go on just as it has been, so far," she continued. "Mr. Harding has followed out my plans as well as I could wish. He disagrees with some of my ideas, and that is why I've decided to have some one who will whole-heartedly follow my orders. I shall depend so much on you!"

William's eyes glistened. "Count on me."

"Even against Mrs. Mallew?" she smiled.

He stopped instantly in the doorway. "Frankness is my watchword. Mrs. Mallew I regard highly. Business is business. Mrs. M. can take care of herself. What was I to Mrs. Mallew? Mr. Sanderson's secretary. What am I now? Miss Sanderson's chief of police." He waved Mrs. Mallew into the void.

When he was gone Moira realised that a new era had come in her work. The little, compact force that had made the city amenable, however unwillingly, to her government was broken in upon. Percy Williams would not be the tower of strength that Harding had been. What effectiveness he would have must be given by her. She was henceforth the

166 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

source of power and authority in Atui, by herself, whereas of old Harding's independence and sturdy energy had largely supplemented her own. She could not understand at the moment that she was merely following the natural course of all autocrats in getting rid of powerful servants. She was still confident that the City Bureaux rested on the strong foundation of universal principles; she could not suspect that it was forced upon a rebellious community by an armed and highly efficient police. But she deeply felt that she could endure no opposition in any one, asserting to herself that this feeling was a laudable determination to bring Atui happiness against great odds.

As a matter of fact, the outward signs of achievement were numerous. The sick, the maimed and the beggars were removed to Sorry Valley. Pretty gowns, neatly dressed heads, cleanly shod feet and elastic figures were evidence on every street that the various Bureaux had accomplished much. Stringent regulation of the saloons had made the thoroughfares pleasant places of exercise, and Dr. Maxwell's assiduous inspection of all citizens had weeded out half the ills that afflict a tropical city. With this change in the physical aspect of the community had followed a certain moral improvement and satisfaction which might easily be taken for contentment, or even happiness. Moira could point proudly, as her father admitted, to great changes in the lives of twelve thousand people. She considered that the hardest work was done. It only remained to complete the task and keep up the standard.

It was this sense of success that had made her

bitterly impatient of Harding's disloyalty. With her devotion to honesty in thought and speech and act, she could understand his hypocrisy in regard to Mrs. Mallew only as a deliberate falseness. He knew that her plan had succeeded, and yet he denied her right to wholly control its workings. It was as if he had introduced poor materials into her building, as if he were quietly striving to undo what he had publicly helped her to accomplish. Mrs. Mallew! she thought. A woman with a past! that such a creature should tamper with the fealty of her servant! should set up her petty and undeserving interests against the welfare of a whole city! that Harding, alert, experienced and her sworn adjutant, should fall into the snare of a wicked adventuress. What would Atui think if it discovered that Miss Sanderson's chief of police had secretly aided her enemy? How the opposition would laugh! What an injury to her great plan!

She felt herself openly scorned for the first time in her life. She could not bring herself to face the queries and sly looks that would greet her at the City Bureaux. So that day she kept the house.

Her luncheon was tasteless, but she forced herself to eat, in order to maintain her physical strength. She grew more and more nervous as the afternoon hours advanced and the daily tide of heat rose. When the shadow of Atui at last darkened the Red House, she decided that she must go down town, at whatever risk of having to explain that there was no personal reason for the change in chiefs. She had convinced herself that there was none. Public policy demanded it. She called for her carriage.

168 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

It was at the door when Harding himself appeared in plain white duck and a straw hat.

She did not know what to say. She felt justly angry that he had assumed himself to be still entitled to a personal relationship with her before she intimated the footing on which he was to go. On the other hand, she was really anxious to know how he felt towards her. She allowed a conventional word of greeting to welcome him.

Harding, aware of her humour, tried to pay no attention to her chilly manner. "I thought I'd come up and tell you about my new job," he said easily.

She felt compelled to listen. He went on, seating himself on the porch rail. "Your father has turned over to me the electrical plant and some other engineering business. Do you remember the estimates I gave him that day you made me chief? He thinks the saving will be worth while."

"I'm very glad," she said stiffly. "I thought maybe you would get Mr. Williams's old place."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," he answered simply. "But I wouldn't make a good secretary, you see."

"Is there anything further I can do for you?" she inquired, parasol in hand.

"I'd like to talk to you," he responded, colouring slightly.

"I was just going down to the office."

"Put it off a while. I've found out something you ought to know."

"Really — perhaps you'd better tell Mr. Williams?"

"I'd better do nothing of the sort," he returned sharply.

She gave him a cool, amused glance, and sat down resignedly.

"I've concealed something from you," he began seriously, "which I can see since our conversation last night you would consider yourself perfectly entitled to know. In order that my brief tenure of office may be spotless and that you may be sure I'm not carrying away any secrets of weight, I decided to come up and unbosom myself."

"Thank you!" she said demurely.

"You accused me of disloyalty to you because I didn't come out and unfold to you the secret of Mrs. Mallew's life, Miss Sanderson. I take it that it wasn't entirely because it was Mrs. Mallew concerned, but because you thought it was a matter within your province as head of this government."

"Quite right. I don't pry into the affairs of private parties. I do think I'm entitled to know as much as my subordinates about things that may have a bearing on public matters."

"Exactly. Do you know the history of the man you appointed chief of police?"

"Mr. Williams?" she said quickly. "I fail to see —"

"Not Mr. Williams, Miss Sanderson. I'm referring to myself. I was your chief of police, your principal assistant, if I may flatter myself. Much more important than Mrs. Mallew! Did you know a solitary thing about me?"

She stared at him, wide-eyed.

"Do you know whether I'm married, an ex-con-

vict, a thief or a wife-beater? Do you really know a single thing about me except what you've seen?"

She shook her head. "I don't see the meaning of all this!"

"It's this: somebody told you a thing which I didn't tell you, though I knew of it. You discharge me on the ground of disloyalty. I know a great many things which I've never told you — about myself. You never asked me to tell you and even when you considered me unfaithful to my trust it never occurred to you to demand an accounting of my past in order to judge me by it. Now I am going to make no secrets about myself to you."

She glanced at him timidly. "I don't see why anything you have done could concern me now," she said slowly. "I see your point, of course. I took you on faith. You violated my trust and so — I merely got another assistant."

"I didn't violate your trust," he said sternly. "That is not true. I merely refused to play the tattler and the spy, as much for your sake as for my own. But you accused me of being under Mrs. Mallew's influence. When I thought that over, I saw that you were entitled to know just my attitude. Before I go into that I must tell you that it was purely by accident that I found out Mrs. Mallew's secret, and I felt bound to preserve it so long as she did not oppose you. But that isn't the point. I see now that you couldn't possibly have any assurance of my absolute devotion to your interests because I carefully refrained from even hinting at the truth."

"What is the truth?" she said desperately. "You first accuse yourself and then blame me."

"The truth is this," he said awkwardly. "I—I don't know how to say it the way I should. I—I have a claim on you. There is going to be a time when you will need me, and I'm asking you to remember that I have a claim, that you can really trust me, and that I'm worthy of your confidence. I—I have a claim."

She rose quickly, her eyes flashing. "What claim could you possibly have on me?"

He rose, too. "I love you," he said slowly.

Their eyes met a brief second and he went on, "That's what you didn't know about your chief of police. I've worshipped you for months. But I felt that I couldn't put myself in the right light by telling you. I thought I could serve you better—that you would let me serve you better, if you felt that our relations were impersonal. But I love you. I can't rest under your charge that I was in any way influenced by Mrs. Mallew against you. So I'm telling you now—when I'm wholly free. You can discharge me from my office and hurt me as much as you can, but it doesn't change my feelings."

He looked at her with restrained passion in his eyes. "Now you know why I've worked for you beyond the mere requirements of my position. I'd give years of my life to save you a moment's worry. But you've done with me, and all I ask is one favor: when you need me, send for me. I'll come. Only I'm no longer your servant. I didn't know that it could be so galling to be a subordinate. Hereafter—" he winced at his own words—"you must treat me as your equal. When Moira Sanderson needs Harry Harding all she will have to do is to say so."

172 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"This is wildly absurd!" she stammered, feeling that he had given her no opportunity for the conventional response to his confession.

"Love is never absurd," he answered, maintaining his quietness of manner by a great effort.

"But — how could I know? — what — Oh! it is too much!" She sank into a chair, sobbing.

He looked at her with a wild desire in his heart to take her into his arms. He understood that she was suffering, but he also felt that it was not for him. She was weak from a long strain. Possibly she had begun to realise the loneliness of her position in Atui. Did she yearn for friendship, for comradeship? Then she never was less disposed to be his than at this moment when he had definitely spoiled any chance of a renewal of their old relation.

A weaker man might have snatched at the opportunity given by her momentary breakdown. Harding grimly set his lips and waited for the storm to pass.

When she looked up again, her long lashes dewy, he smiled reassuringly, a brave and manful smile.

"Never mind, Moira dear! I know how much your work is to you and how little I am. Don't bother about my feelings — now. Just remember that I'm always waiting for you, dreaming of the moment when you'll send for me. I shall wait."

He took his hat and left.

Her eyes followed him. Her heart was strangely lighter, though she would not have acknowledged it. She was no longer alone and friendless. Yet she was glad that Harding was gone out of her daily life. The soft virgin within her was afraid of him.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT SANDERSON NEEDED

NOW Thomas Sanderson, secretary-less, snarled over his ledgers, letters and reports till daylight faded into dusk. Unable to work longer — he never liked lamps — he leaned back in his chair and waited for his single hour of daily enjoyment, Mrs. Mallew's visit. This day he especially longed for her coming. He began to feel the weight of his years and his loneliness. The day's tasks had been very wearisome. He even missed Williams's idle chatter.

Mrs. Mallew arrived, as was her habit, after a brief walk. She made no secret of the hope that it improved her complexion. She came into the shadowy room bringing with her the fresh scent of wind and flowers, her hair in light disorder, her eyes sparkling. She shook hands with Sanderson, this being their old custom. When she had flung her wide-brimmed hat on the littered desk, she said cheerfully: "I suppose you got through?"

"It's funny how important a fool can make himself to your comfort," was the answer. "Percy is a fool. I miss him horribly!"

"Do you really think him silly?" she demanded.

"Utterly. I wish Moira joy of him. Chief of police! What can she be thinking of?"

174 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Mrs. Mallew shook her head. "I used to know what young girls thought of," she said smilingly. "If it's not about men, I've forgotten."

"She simply kicked Harding out," he went on. "He called on me this morning, calm as a fish. 'I came to see what you thought about my proposals to rebuild your light and power system,' says the man. 'Where's your other job?' I inquired. 'Your secretary has it,' he told me. And not another word except for business."

"Whom shall you get as secretary?" she asked presently.

"Hanged if I know!" was the cross reply. "I sent out to the Leeward Plantation for a clerk named White. I have had my eye on him some time. He was getting into debt and I wouldn't allow 'em to raise his salary till he'd learned his lesson. But it seems Moira got hold of him, and he's getting a hundred a month in the City Bureaux."

"Maybe she would let you have him back."

Sanderson shook his head. "I don't want him. Do you know of anybody that would like the place?"

"Why not try a woman?"

"Such work would spoil her," he answered. "If I liked her around, she would disappoint me. If she did the work well, I'd get to hate her. A good woman is too expensive an article in these latitudes to make a secretary out of. And I don't like the other kind; the cold, hard, businesslike sort."

"Your daughter seems pretty businesslike, yet she isn't of the disagreeable kind," Mrs. Mallew said gently.

"My dear, Moira will be beyond all of us within

a year, if Fate doesn't step in. Do you suppose a real woman would have discharged Harding, the best friend she had? If a woman's intuition doesn't tell her who her friends are, she's lost her most precious gift. The only hope for Moira that I see is that she's still feminine enough to transfer her confidence from a man to an empty-headed fool. *That* is genuinely cheering."

"You don't sympathise with her plans?"

"How can I?" Sanderson growled. "She's found in books that everybody ought to make everybody else happy. She knows that when she has a headache, or her complexion is bad, or her appetite fails that she is what she calls 'unhappy.' So she is curing all Atui of headaches, repairing the complexions and stimulating the appetites of the citizens. Result: streets full of flaunting girls, foppish men and saucy children. Moira is a moral cocktail. She has made everybody in this island drunk. The only sober man here is Harding, and so she gets rid of him because he spoils the chorus. When they wake up they will have splitting heads and ringing ears."

"Will you interfere? I thought you were going to help her out?"

"I certainly won't interfere," was the tart reply. "I never interfere with any body so long as they think they're all right. Providence will step in, though. And when she runs against it she'll find that her rules, beauty parlours, first aid to the ugly and all the rest of it will be useless. Her census says there are twelve thousand people here. When old Mr. Destiny drops in, with Mr. Human Nature at his elbow, Miss Moira is going to find that Harding

is worth the whole eleven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine other people so far as backing her up is concerned. You can't change people's natures by powdering their faces or get them exhilarated on champagne."

Mrs. Mallew's clear, pleasant voice broke the long silence that ensued. "I know your daughter doesn't like me," she said. "She thinks me an adventuress, — which I am, in a way. But, Tom, she's young! If anything is dreadful, it's to spoil a girl's youth. Whether she likes me or hates me, I plead with you to spare her, to save her from any great disillusionment. I don't see exactly what can happen, but you frighten me with your assertions that it is all going to end in failure. Can't you understand that it would kill her? Why not step in gently, if she's on the wrong road and — well, even let her think she would have succeeded except that you interfered?"

"What a woman's way of putting things!" Sanderson ejaculated, walking to the window and looking down on the city lights. "If I did that I should be doing precisely what Moira is trying to do: bear other people's burdens. I believe in freedom. She says she does, too. But I believe in freedom to be wrong, to be miserable, to be sick, to be poor. To her those liberties are crimes. Her notion of freedom is to allow people to be happy, healthy and wealthy, and if they refuse, to compel 'em. It'll do for children, but not for men and women. Men rebel against being forced to smile as quickly as they do against compulsion to mourn."

"Everybody wants to be happy!" she protested.

"Each in his own way," he said. He turned

abruptly to her: "Do you know what stands for happiness down deep in the hearts of all Atui? Money! There isn't a person here who wouldn't say to Moira, if he dared, 'Give me the money and I'll be healthy, contented and ask you for nothing.'"

"Money isn't everything," Mrs. Mallew murmured.

"Which is the equivalent of saying that happiness can't be had by everybody," he snapped. "It won't give me back my youth nor make Moira wise. Neither will the City Bureaux."

"Moira is really happy in her work," she ventured.

"Would she be happy if I didn't give her the money for the plans and schemes and departments? Would she be happy if she had to start out to reform Atui on fifty dollars a month?"

"Impossible!"

Sanderson laughed. "As a matter of fact, it is costing something over twenty thousand dollars a month to make—Moira contented! Luckily, Atui can afford it. Shan't we go and have some tea?"

Over the candle-lit table Mrs. Mallew said, "Have you seen Sorry Valley?"

"I understand it took the entire police force to quiet the patients there not long ago," he rasped.

"There's a poor chap in the Valley I think might do for your secretary," she went on, smiling. "As Moira took your secretary, why not take one of her patients?"

"Is the man sick?"

"He squints terribly, and he wouldn't let Dr. Maxwell operate on him so they sent him to the Valley

178 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

to think over his sins. He was a workman in the machine shops."

"Married?"

"Yes. He told me — he appealed to me — that he was making a good living and he couldn't afford to risk his eyesight even to become good looking. It seems he does specially fine work. The City Bureaux are supporting his family while he's shut up."

"If he has education enough to write letters and keep books I'll take him," Sanderson said promptly.

Mrs. Mallew laughed. "And every time he's seen on the street the police will nab him and send him back to the doctor, who will exile him to the Valley again. You must get him some sort of an order from Moira."

"Then I can't use him," Sanderson replied. "As I said, I won't interfere in the slightest with the City Bureaux. That institution must stand or fall by itself. By the way, the Reverend Nathan Harrow is out of jail for the second time. He was up to see me this morning."

"He refused to close his night classes for children, didn't he?"

"He did. I'm sure he thought he would enjoy being a martyr, and Moira and Jourjon were so earnest about the wrong he was doing the poor kids that they were perfectly agreed, Harrow and they, that jail was the only place for him. But he's cured now. He wants to be made jailer. He told me he was sure there was a great field for his work among the prisoners. So he's taken a leaf from Moira's book and decided that if you wish to convert people you

must have them in your custody. I sent him to Williams. If he doesn't land the job I'll make him my secretary. It'll open his mind still more."

Mrs. Mallew clapped her hands.

"I see him in the place! Percy will scorn a preacher on his force. I can hear him rate the old man for even thinking of it. And for you to put him in your own office — Tom, you're inspired!"

Sanderson seemed embarrassed.

"He brought up another matter, Mrs. M. He did it very decently, too, as it was hardly his business. He said — intimated rather — that your position here was misunderstood. It seems he thinks we ought to be married right away. He spoke of gossip."

Her face paled. She leaned forward on the table, her arms outstretched towards him. Her voice was strained.

"I thought I had got over my sensitiveness to what people say," she began. "I haven't. I've felt for some time that I'm in a false position. Please don't speak till I'm done! I've never told you half that was on my mind. I've merely accepted things as they came along, and — I've been pretty happy for the past few months. But let's look matters squarely in the face, Tom. First, my husband is still living and still — my husband. Secondly, a good many hard things have been said of me. Thirdly, you are a rich man.

"I'll confess that I came to Atui to get a fresh start. I admit that when I saw you were attracted by me, I used every power I've ever possessed to make you like me more. When you asked me to

180 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

marry you, I tasted the first true happiness of my life. I've lived dreaming of a future with respect and wealth and power at my command. But I see another thing now. Something has happened 'way down in my heart — something I never expected. I'm afraid — I'm afraid it's going to keep me from marrying you!"

Sanderson stared at her without a word. His lean face seemed cast in bronze. Mrs. Mallew went on, a little hysterically:

"Yes, I'm afraid I can't marry you!"

"The reason!" he broke out harshly.

She gulped, smiled bravely, and burst out, "Because I love you!"

She buried her face in her hands.

Sanderson pushed back his chair and got up, much agitated. "I don't understand you!" he muttered.

She looked up tearfully. "I must make you understand!" she cried. "Oh, can't you see?" She darted to her feet. "Look at me! Look at the adventuress! the woman who came here to entrap you, to make you a slave, to fatten on your wealth! Do you know who sent me to Atui? *Mallew*! He told me all about you, that you were getting old, that you had money, that I could twist you around my little finger. Can't you understand? I came here to cheat you, to rob you, to make you my plaything!"

"Well!"

"I did!" she stormed, beautiful in her self-contempt. "*That* was how I came to Atui! Do you know that Mallew actually bought me new gowns to dazzle you with? Mallew, who wouldn't have given me money for a meal if I'd been starving? And I

came. I used every art I had and — and you treated me like a lady. I did a thousand things to bewitch you — and you were a gentleman. To save my face, when I knew others would tell you about my husband, I threw myself on your mercy — the intriguing woman's last trump card! And you didn't say weak things, nor scorn me nor forgive me. You simply said: 'Mallew will have no claim on you presently.' You respected me when I was in the lowest depths. You offered me honour instead of dishonour and love instead of lust."

She confronted him in all her wild loveliness, her magnificent eyes flaming. "Therefore I, Louise Mallew, adventuress and lost woman, love you as never woman loved man before! — Marry you? Ruin your life? I — I *can't*!"

She burst into piteous sobs, her hands over her face.

Sanderson picked up the candle, snuffed it, set it down, wiped his forehead and stared at the ceiling.

"I wish you wouldn't insist on telling me things I've pretty well known all along," he remarked gently. "We'll be married to-morrow."

Her hands dropped. She seemed incredulous. "Marry me! You *knew*? — My God!"

He met her extraordinary look of self-abasement, almost timidly.

"I never interfere with other people's affairs," he muttered awkwardly. "All that was your business, not mine. But — I want you for my wife. I need you. Tom Sanderson of Atui needs you — and he never needed anybody before!"

The quaint confession, uttered in his constrained

182 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY.

voice, brought a new light into her eyes. She brushed her hair back from her brow and tried to smile. The pitiful attempt ended in another gust of tears. Yet the single word he caught told him she would not resist him. She held out her hand. He shook it gravely. That clasp sealed them more firmly than any caress.

CHAPTER XXII

TO FEED THE CAPTIVE

WHEN Moira Sanderson reached her office the next morning after her interview with Harding, Percy Williams was waiting with his budget of news.

"Your father and Mrs. Mallew were married this morning," he informed her airily. "I've just come down from the Big House. Old Harrow performed the ceremony."

By pure force of will she kept herself from screaming, so sudden and deep was the wound. For a moment she dared not lift her eyes. She managed to say coldly, "I thought Mrs. Mallew's husband was still alive."

"Alive but as good as divorced," he returned. "Your father saw to that some time ago. He wrote to the authorities in Papeete. Brother Mallew is now a convict on Noumea, and therefore no longer a husband. The letter came a week ago."

She nodded, now fully in control of herself. Williams was puzzled at her lack of interest in his tidings but went on, after a short silence, to report threatened trouble in Sorry Valley.

"We've got two hundred people out there," he explained. "About a hundred of 'em are cripples and beggars and paupers — poor wretches! They're

fairly well satisfied to be looked after. But the rest of 'em — my, what a set of wild men!"

"They know how they can get away — by doing what Doctor Maxwell told them to do."

"That's the argument I used with that cross-eyed man only this morning. I went out there at daylight. I nailed him on his way back to town — you know he has permission to do some work in the shops which nobody else can do — and I told him straight that he was a rebel. 'It's no use, Hubbard,' I said. 'You're a rebel, that's what you are. Get your eyes straightened out and back you come to town and your family. We don't like your looks at present.' You have no notion what language the fellow used. Then, when I got there the overseer wanted six more policemen. Says they tried to set fire to the main house last night."

"I'll go out myself this afternoon," she remarked. "Dr. Maxwell will go with me. I don't think that cross-eyed man realises that we wish to help him."

Williams remarked that he had detailed a sergeant and six men to reinforce the guards at the Valley. In his ears still sounded the hot sentences of Hubbard whose bad eye had lost him his job, his home and his freedom. The new chief had not been associated with Thomas Sanderson for nothing. He understood perfectly the limit of interference in other people's business.

To change the subject he mentioned that the Reverend Mr. Harrow was now secretary at the Big House. "He took over the place just after the wedding."

Maira's eyes flashed. "I fancy we owe that to

Mrs. Mal — Mrs. Sanderson," she said. "At any rate, he was down here wanting to be appointed jailer. He gave me that alternative to his resuming his night school on the ground that he had to do his Master's work. I'm glad he's out of our way at last."

"Harding was out at the Valley this morning," Williams pursued, casually. "He's starting work on the new reservoir at the top of the falls."

The red burned on Moira's cheeks. She was furious at herself for showing any emotion at all, particularly before Williams. That individual, however, wholly mistook her feeling and remonstrated: "I say, Miss Sanderson, old Harding's all right. I'll admit he's an impractical chap, a bit of a bore and all that. He was when I knew him in the States. I told him he was too straight-laced to fit in here, never could make it go, and all that. To be frank, Harding has odd notions of what's right and what isn't right. He's always butting into somebody's pet idea and knocking it off its feet on the ground that an honest man wouldn't do such a thing. Naturally, he don't get along in Atui. This is no place for fellows who'll do what they think is right no matter if it breaks 'em. But he's all right, old Harding is. Means well."

He smoothed down his uniform jacket and smiled generously at her. He was rewarded by a curt dismissal over which he shook his head as he made his way back to his own office. His conclusion was that Harding was an ass, but that fools made wise men's opportunities.

Dr. Maxwell willingly assented to the trip to Sorry

Valley, but found his chief very silent during the drive thither. At the entrance Sergeant Yama saluted them. At sight of his squad of six policemen Dr. Maxwell raised his eyebrows. "Guards necessary already?"

"Some of the patients tried to escape," Moira explained briefly.

"Then this is a prison," he said, half to himself.

The carriage rolled on to the main house, where they got out. To the overseer, Moira said that she wished to make an inspection by herself with Dr Maxwell and would need no escort. The official, a pale Portuguese, looked dubious; an imperious nod sent him off.

The first person they met was an old and withered woman, blind of one eye. She peered up into Moira's face, recognised her and began to whine. "It's terribly dreary out here, deary," she mumbled. "Terrible lonesome. How long must I stay?"

Moira drew her white skirts about her. "You must live here," she said distinctly.

"No! no!" whispered the old woman. "No, deary! I can't stand it any longer. Let me go back to my own home."

Moira turned to her companion. "Do you know anything about her?" she inquired in a low tone.

Maxwell studied the miserable visage before him. "Her home, as she calls it, was a wretched room back of a gin-mill on the Reef. She is probably sixty and looks eighty. She will never be better looking than she is now. She may live twenty years yet. She says she is the widow of a man who traded here forty years ago. She can do nothing except beg."

The single bleared eye shot a venomous glance at the doctor. He responded to that evil message by remarking: "If I had my way I should chloroform her."

Moirra shuddered and passed on, followed by muttered oaths from the hag.

"It seems one can't make every one happy," she said bravely.

"A system must have time to work in," said Dr. Maxwell. "It takes twenty years to weed out such remnants as that. She is the product of our 'civilisation' as now practised.— Hello, here's our cross-eyed friend."

Hubbard had been sullenly watching them from the porch of one of the houses. His naturally intelligent and frank face was dark with repressed anger. His sturdy figure was in an attitude of defiance and he ignored Moirra's salutation. Not at all abashed she stopped to speak to him. "I understand you tried to leave here."

"I did," he answered curtly.

"It's been explained to you how you can get away."

"It's been explained to me that you don't like my looks," he returned. "You don't consider me fit to appear in our beauty show."

"My dear Mr. Hubbard," she exclaimed, glad to be able to expound her system, "you know that deformity makes you uncomfortable and interferes with your happiness. I'm anxious that everybody should be happy. How simple for you to allow Dr. Maxwell here to perform a slight operation and make you look like — other men."

188 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

She was appalled by the sudden ferocity of his expression. "Yes! and if I lose my sight? The doctor will tell you the risk is there. How about making me happy by losing my job and starving my family?"

"Your family are being cared for," she said with dignity.

"Cared for! When the man who earns their living is in jail because he's got a squint! Miss Sanderson, you can run this place to suit yourself so long as the policemen obey you. But don't fool yourself about doing it for any other reason than to satisfy your own silly, selfish notions. Make people happy! Bah! Ask my wife and children what they think of your scheme."

"I expect to have to contend with a certain amount of ignorance," she murmured.

"Ignorance!" he almost shouted. "You feather-headed minx, do you call my wife, who's a respectable mother, ignorant? You don't know anything at all yourself except that your father's a millionaire — the sum of human knowledge!" He turned on his heel as if it were only by so doing that he could refrain from slapping her.

"What a temper!" she remarked to Maxwell, trembling. "How I pity the wife of such a man!"

"I'd like to try the effect of pink on him," Maxwell said seriously. "It should have a very ameliorating effect on his mood which, at present, verges on homicidal."

Moira laughed. "I can't imagine such a burly

fellow in pink!" The doctor refused to smile at the spectacle offered him.

The remainder of their walk through the Valley was a little pleasanter than the wrangle with Hubbard. Distributed throughout the city in their natural environment of shabbiness and squalour, the denizens of Sorry Valley would have attracted only passing attention. The concentrated misery, ugliness and disease in this lovely spot was appalling. Even Dr. Maxwell, hardened as he was, fell silent, except for an occasional mutter of "chloroform."

Moira found herself well inside the door of the last house before she realised who the occupant was. Harding rose from a table covered with maps and blue prints and said hastily, "You find me at work on the plans for the new reservoir, Miss Sander-son."

"I thought this was the dwelling of one of the people sent out here," she said stiffly. "So sorry to have interrupted you."

"You're the only satisfied person we've found," Maxwell remarked, sitting down wearily. "I didn't know there were so many poor devils in Atui."

"All your work," Harding responded. "They're the result of your cleaning up the city. You must have some place to throw the refuse, you know."

The doctor rubbed his head. "It doesn't seem as if we had hit on the right thing," he said peevishly. "I believe I was right when I said chloroform was the only remedy."

"I fancy it'll come to that or rifles," was the calm reply.

Maxwell nodded. "Professionally I dislike concentrated discontent," he continued. "Miss Sanderson, sit down. The sun is hot and you're very pale."

She refused an offered chair and remained standing by the window. Harding, after a glance at her resolute back, turned to the doctor. "I'm trying to relieve matters a little by putting some of them to work. I've found about thirty fair labourers. The best of 'em won't listen to me. They think it's a matter of principle to stand out and protest against the whole idea of Sorry Valley."

Moira refused a share in the conversation and both men felt the constraint. A discussion of the advantages of the new water-power system was cut short by a terrific explosion that shook the little house and deafened its occupants. Harding reassured his visitors. "They're blasting out the rock for the new dam."

"Pretty heavy charge, I should say," Maxwell remarked.

"Too heavy," was the careless answer. "Some of the men will find it out, too. I have to humour them a little. They think it's fun to make as much racket as possible."

"It is claimed by some that sharp shocks of the auditory nerves are good for certain diseases," the doctor said, interestedly. "In fact, it's possible that the savage liking for noise and sound is a natural appetite, like that for salt."

Harding grinned. "I'll doctor them up, then. Only—" His voice fell. Maxwell leaned towards him. "If I were you," Harding went on, "I'd per-

suade Miss Sanderson to scatter this crowd she's got here. Trouble!" He could say no more as Moira turned, with a cold, "I think we had better be getting back, doctor."

Maxwell nodded to Harding that he understood the hint and rose. Moira glanced at Harding and said, "I fear your blasting will spoil the quieting effects I had hoped from this place. How long will it last?"

"A week or so," was the response. "I'm sorry. It is quite out of the question to accomplish the necessary work without using explosives, Miss Sanderson."

"I see," she said and departed.

In the carriage she broke out to the doctor with "It is too bad to have my plans all spoiled! Why on earth can't I have this Valley just as I want it? I don't understand. What is a power plant compared to soothing and helping all these people?"

"Really, I believe the excitement will do them good," Maxwell assured her. "After all, they must have something to amuse them."

She dropped her petulant air. "I feel as if I could spend years without hearing a sound or lifting a hand," she remarked.

Maxwell nodded. "Slight neurasthenia. Over tension. I prescribe a fortnight's rest."

"With a thousand things to be done?" she demanded. "Impossible!"

"Then try wearing purple," he said simply. "It will gently soothe and stimulate."

His sincerity in making this bizarre recommendation made her laugh. "I should look like a fright!"

192 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

she said cheerfully. Later she told him she was still discouraged by the problems of the valley. "I'll find some way!"

Dr. Maxwell, like most enthusiasts, was not altogether a fool. He understood that Moira's stubbornness was not the obstinacy of a mistaken person trying to force a path, but the patience of one confronted with unexpected difficulties who refuses to go backward in defeat. She was trying to maintain her position, untenable as it was, until she could discern some possible means of winning out. Maxwell could not deny to himself that he saw no way of making a success of Sorry Valley. But the Scot admired pluck in any woman, and he was stirred to the depths by this spectacle of undismayed persistence. No one knew better than he the prodigious obstacles she had already overcome. He had been at her side for months, in the thick of her fight for beauty and happiness for all. She had tired out his great physical strength and endurance as well as left him far behind in direct ardour for the contest. He had acknowledged himself an enthusiast for social reform, but she was far beyond him in zeal and courage. A cautious man in all personal matters, purely intellectual in motive, he now allowed himself to obey a profound emotion of sympathy. Moira was astounded to feel his cool hand on hers. She impulsively drew away from him. "Do you want to make me cry?"

"You will not cry," he said gently, taking her fingers in his again. She was surprised to find that his touch actually soothed her. To cover the awk-

wardness of the situation she murmured, "I suppose there is some scientific explanation."

"The explanation has nothing to do with science," he said drily.

"Oh!" she responded, with a sudden complete contentment in the moment. Neither said anything further till the carriage left the valley.

In her office she found the Reverend Nathan Harrow waiting. The missionary offered her his big, bony hand. "I'm your father's secretary, now," he said in a tuneless voice. "I had occasion to spend much time in your jail, by your orders. I have offered myself as jailer that I might preach the Word to the prisoners. My offer has not been accepted." He raised his hand as she was about to speak. "I beg you to listen. My duties at the Big House are not onerous. In accepting a stipend from your father, I consider that I am placing myself in a position to follow my Master's work more effectively. I wish to be chaplain of what you have called Sorry Valley, to serve without pay."

She was looking at him while he spoke. Beneath the austere manner and harsh speech there was strength. She recalled how he had defied her in the matter of the night classes for children. Yet he had taken to his imprisonment without any complaint. Evidently he bore no grudge. In all Atui, with the exception of one man (whom she wasn't sure she did not hate) Harrow stood out the one person inflexibly obstinate in his own notions. Everybody else gave her at least lip-service. The missionary refused either a smile of acquiescence or a

194 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

prayer for mercy. She leaned forward, motioning him to sit down beside her.

"Mr. Harrow," she said earnestly, "what is the greatest difficulty you have to contend with in your missionary work?"

A gleam of humour shone in his deep-set eyes. "My converts."

"You mean after they agree with — your doctrine?"

He brushed his disordered grey hair. "It is the burden we bear," he said simply. "The struggle for the soul is an exhilarating battle. But when the victory is won, then —"

"Then what?"

"One must keep his captive and feed him."

The phrase opened huge horizons. It seemed to sum up the profound wisdom of all the ages of missions and teaching and propaganda. The Reverend Nathan Harrow sat in her office, and out of the dull experience of a toilsome life pronounced the solution of the great burdensome problem that confronts the preceptor of humanity: to feed the captive. Atui was vanquished for health and beauty. Now she must feed it, make its chains light, its captivity beloved.

She turned her shining eyes on him. "You don't know how I need you!" she said softly. "Will you help me?"

"I can labour only at night," he said harshly. "You have no objection — in Sorry Valley?"

"If you can do anything to comfort them, to make them feel that they can be happy if they try," she mur-

mured. "They won't listen to me — they don't understand."

He looked at her with an extraordinary expression of patience, of comprehension, of endurance. "I am accustomed to such work," he said.

"Do you mind if I take you out there to-night?" she said impulsively. "I would like your advice. I would like to see things again, with you."

"At what time?"

"After supper? At eight o'clock? I'll call for you with the carriage."

"I shall be ready." He lifted his rusty hat from the desk and strode out.

When he was gone she thought gently of him. "I wonder if he is happy?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHADOW

SORRY VALLEY lay in sheer moonlight when they walked into it. The right bank of the stream—a thread of shining silver—was asleep like a pool of liquid vegetation. The left bank stretched up to the foot of Mount Atui with every house and tree distinct. To Moira's surprise no lights burned in any window and there was an absolute stillness, as if the inhabitants lay dead in their dwellings.

She spoke to Harrow about it. He strode on without answering until they came opposite the first house. Here he stopped abruptly and stared at the moon riding high above the mountain's shoulder. "It is always so in prisons," he remarked. "Prisoners go to sleep easily after the long day. But they don't stay asleep."

She saw that he was almost unconscious of her presence. The pallid light brought out the ruggedness of his features, emphasised the gauntness of his frame and gave her an impression that he was very old. His harsh voice broke from his lips almost in a cry, "It is only God who giveth sleep through the long night."

Unconsciously she struggled against the spell of

the stillness. "It is only nine o'clock," she said, dully enough.

The missionary roused himself. "How many are there here?" he demanded.

"About two hundred."

"Think of two hundred souls that must lie awake!" he muttered.

"But they are all asleep!" she protested.

"They will waken presently," he said simply.

"They can't sleep."

The sadness in his voice proclaimed that he knew what he spoke about. For one instant she saw above her the enormous shadow of human unrest and agony, the hidden background of life. The feeling was inexpressible, an emotion terrible and profound. She drew closer to the gaunt figure beside her. Harrow walked slowly on.

Gradually, so imperceptibly that she did not at first understand what was happening, the valley became full of voices. For a moment she merely felt that some one had spoken and another had answered. Then she caught a faint, almost inaudible cry which floated, like a wisp of mist, from the recesses of the trees. It was answered by some other voice, and then as frogs take up their chant in a marsh, voice after voice joined in the tuneless chorus. It rose into throbbing ecstasy of pain, ebbed and died. The valley lay steeped in breathless quiet.

Once again she heard a slender sound, as of crying in the far distance. It rose cricket-like into plangent shrillness. Then it, too, faded into the silence.

She and the missionary stood together, motionless, listening to the ghostly sound. It rose again and

from here and there other thin voices took up the recital of dim, vague, faint sad histories. Inarticulate, rising and falling, dissolving at times into vibrant stillness too high for human ears, this incredible nocturne went on, unending and full of sorrow. So slender of volume, yet poignant in quality, it beat on Moira's inner senses like the echoes of terrible shrieks in choking dreams. Then it grew in strength, rose in one piercing and discordant cry of agony and she saw Harrow lift his grey face to the splendid firmament as if in wordless prayer for passing souls.

While he prayed — was it prayer, she wondered? — a whispering horror floated imminent above her, flitting viewlessly between her and the stars. And as it passed she thought the very earth under her feet gave small voices upward, like the plaint of souls stirring in warm darkness. The stream among the rushes babbled monotonously of death. She was surrounded, hemmed in by sounds of irremediable grief. And Harrow prayed on, gaunt and grim and motionless.

She grasped his arm when a shrill scream from near at hand shattered the chorus into utter silence.

"What is it? What can it be?" she begged him piteously.

He looked down at her, his deep-set eyes shining with tenderness. "Only sinners crying out in their sleep," he told her.

"Are they asleep?" she whispered.

He drew her gently towards a cottage standing in its own shadow as if in a black pool. His long arm went out, pointing to something. She crept nearer. On the open porch lay a woman asleep. A scanty

lock of hair flowed down the white pillow like a slow ooze of blood under the moon. The grey lips moved, quivered, gave forth a hoarse and inharmonious cry. The sound of it cracked through the stillness. The valley muttered its hideous response.

Once more the hag raised her tuneless voice. Again the shadows answered. Moira saw a skeleton hand beating the coverlet. She tried to burst away from the spell that enmeshed her. But she was held fast. She tried to scream. Her throat was gripped by a paralysing terror.

Harrow's low words saved her. His intense and poignant note of sorrow seemed to gather up the whole faint chorus of woe into a single human plea: "Where is their God, that they may find him?"

They walked on. The missionary kept muttering to himself, as if he was replying to all the cries that sounded from the darkness. Moira caught one word often repeated: . . . "lost sheep . . . lost . . ."

A hundred times she would have fled. But her guide led on, his austere face marked deep with pity. Now and then some word from an invisible sleeper struck like a blow on her heart. She knew now what this awful chorus was. It was only the mutterings of her prisoners, talking in their uneasy sleep, unconscious cry and unconscious response, a strange mingling of involuntary sound! Yet she could not but fancy that in the air hovered bodiless spirits, beating with their fleshless hands against the barriers of the implacable heavens.

When at last they emerged at the foot of the falls and its steady plash drowned the unspeakable antiphony behind them, she felt infinitely aged and weak,

200 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

She would have sunk down on the steps of the little house which nestled by the coolness of the cascade, but Harrow touched her arm. She followed his eyes and saw Harding stretched out on a blanket, fast asleep at the edge of the porch.

She realised at that moment that she could not bear to hear his voice raised in the litany of the damned. He stood forth as a refuge to her forlorn soul, her possible staunch defender when the world grew too awful for her courage. Her impulse was to flee. But Harrow stood silently by the pool, and she dared not face the backward path alone.

Harding slept on, his head on his arm, breathing easily and steadily. His lips were firmly closed and on his face was an expression of patience and resolution. She was calmed by this unperturbed presence. There was a peace which the valley did not know. She felt that she had passed through a vale of despair and agony to come out at last into peace. Was it a portent that at the end of that terrible hour she had found Harding? She remembered his words: "*I shall wait.*" And he was here.

In that long moment the undisciplined and single-hearted girl saw the shadowland in which she was later to live. The straight and inflexible course of her narrow life, the simplicity of her purpose, the heedless righteousness of her thoughts were compelled for the moment to yield to a stronger power. In her heart a little fire kindled, the fire that in its flame sums up all human passion and desire. For the first time in her life she felt the prodigious pang of earthly love. She was filled with a longing to touch the sleeping man's face, to listen to his breathing, to

brush his lips with her fingers. And she was unashamed. Her emotion was pure and stainless — humanity stirring within her as it had waked and stirred in a thousand generations of maidens before her.

She stepped backward into the dusk and leaned against a tree bole. She dared not trust herself closer to him. She fancied herself his wife, watching that untroubled sleep of a strong man every night. She felt the sudden swift desire for a home, for a child at her breast, for the gurgling cry in the darkness of a baby for its mother. And he loved her. The words as he said them had been merely words. She had felt neither joy nor sadness when she heard them. They had conveyed to her mind nothing but a repetition of a dull and annoying saying in the mouths of all men to beautiful women. But at this moment she remembered them with triumph. He loved her! He had come out of the void and called to her to be his mate. Her ears had been stopped. She had not known. But now, standing in the warm and fragrant darkness, she knew and throbbed deliciously.

She turned quietly away and touched Harrow on the arm. They went quickly back through Sorry Valley. The dull murmur and occasional cry were no longer terrifying. Its horror was past. Only profound pity remained, pity for those who struggled without any vision of the other side, without hope for the strength asleep in peace at the end of the road.

While the carriage drove slowly back to the city she talked with the missionary. Somewhat timidly

she explained her great desire for her people, that they should be happy and prosperous. For the first time in her life she was humble and distrustful of herself. She told him what she had done and why she had done it. Harrow listened gravely, his lean head bent slightly forward. He had never known this side of the girl who had imprisoned him and refused to hear his arguments for his own position. When she had finished he patted her hand paternally.

"It is your desire and purpose that count," he said in his harsh voice. "After all—" She felt that he was shy of speaking further.

"What were you going to say?" she asked softly.

He gave a short laugh, mirthless and gruff. "It is the work that counts, Miss Sanderson. I am a missionary of the Word of God. You are a missionary, too, of an idea. After all, we are both selfish. We seek our own happiness. I find no solace for my spirit apart from proclaiming the Gospel. You find comfort in enforcing a plan of happiness. We both shall fail."

"Fail? Fail?" she echoed.

"Fail," he said firmly. "We sow. We shall not reap."

"I never could have a minute's peace if I thought all my efforts here were to go for nothing!"

"And you will never find complete happiness until you are ready to accept failure," he returned. "But don't be discouraged. I *know* what I'm talking about, and I know that there is a God above that uses our feeble efforts for His own ends. We fail"—he threw more volume into his tones—"but God does not fail."

She was thoughtful. "I can't really say I believe it. If I weren't sure I am right I'd quit the whole business to-morrow."

"Youth!" he croaked.

"But you keep on working!" she protested. "You don't really believe you are a failure?"

"I am glad," he said austere. "It makes me know that there is a God above me."

The simple piety in his tone affected her strangely. She had heard men preach many dogmas and assert many philosophies. But the plain sincerity and child-like earnestness of the missionary was utterly foreign to anything she had seen in other men with a message. She perceived that Harrow believed what he said, that his humbleness before his deity was unfeigned and true. It moved her greatly. She felt vaguely that her own self-confidence was a poor substitute for a stern faith in God. It tallied, also, with her instinctive distaste for the theoretic as opposed to the practical. Harrow's faith was completely practical. It stood every test of experience. For the moment she caught a glimpse of the religion that makes this human world divine.

"You won't be offended if I say something?" she said presently to her companion.

He patted her hand again.

"It sounds awful for me to say it. I mean to be honest — I must be honest. It is true. I feel that I am my own God. I have been given the power and I must exercise it. I must be myself, clear to the limit of my strength and ability. If I am, I shall succeed!"

The missionary was long silent. When he spoke

204 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

it was huskily. "We all think that secretly before we learn better." He sighed. "It is no sin when one honestly thinks one's self divine. But some day you will learn that we are mortal."

"They will have to beat me to the ground before I'll surrender," she answered, almost passionately. "I have the happiness of thousands on my conscience this very night. They trust me. I *must* succeed." She turned on him her steady eyes: "Can't you see that I could so easily seek my own happiness? That is simplicity itself!"

"Is it?"

She did not know that it was another Moira that had entered Sorry Valley that night which answered so promptly, "So easy!" nor that the happiness she so confidently asserted could be hers was in reality only the formless dream of her wakened womanhood.

"I will do my best in the Valley," he went on. "I shall labour to comfort them and bring them into a spirit of peace. Where your work stops, my Master's begins. Maybe—" He smiled faintly.

As he left her she held out her hand.

"I'm glad you understand me," she said. "I'm afraid my tongue has run away with me to-night. I didn't mean some of the things I said as they must have sounded to you."

His stern face softened. "I preach the one Gospel that will touch your people in the Valley," he said earnestly. "You deal with the happy and the healthy. I will deal with those you reject. God rejects none. He has no Sorry Valley."

He strode away, and she sat in the carriage unconscious of the fact that the coachman was look-

ing around for orders. Receiving none, he presently drove on to the Red House.

In her own room Moira stood and stared at herself in the mirror. The reflected image was subtly changed. Until this day her life had been in unbroken sunlight. Now a shadow was over her, she felt. Did the future hold failure and sorrow and misery? Had she built on a weak foundation?

She had always considered herself religious. Tonight she envied the missionary his God. Still under the spell of Sorry Valley she was humbled. She ardently resolved to be more patient and sympathetic. Like many a person confronted with unknown perils she resolved to propitiate the unknown gods. She could not know that she was too late and that her happiness was at last to be achieved through the fires of suffering.

CHAPTER XXIV

WILLIAMS IS ROUGHLY HANDLED

DURING the next three months the line of demarcation between the adherents of the City Bureaux and the reactionaries deepened. It was at first a social division. On the one hand Moira's prestige, lavishness and genuine enthusiasm attracted the young and eager. The many well-to-do people naturally took sides, since sides were to be taken, with the daughter of the richest and most powerful man in their circle. She stood for the aristocracy, though she would have been the last to own it.

On the other hand an increasing number of Atuans grew to hate her government. Its stringent regulation of personal habits, its constant surveillance of individual life first annoyed, then provoked and at last utterly alienated some of those whom she should have striven to conciliate. Instead, opposition to the City Bureaux was punished by social exclusion. As was natural the outsiders brooded, fermented with sense of personal indignity and the social division became political.

Sorry Valley was at once the strength and the weakness of Moira Sanderson's government. It had begun as a dumping-ground for those whom she found unfitted or unwilling to share in the new society of health and beauty. But it had proved too

convenient a place of mild punishment to be overlooked when it was needful to correct the erring or chastise the stubborn. Like all complicated systems the City Bureaux became almost automatic in its operation, and its rejected ones were thoughtlessly sent to Sorry Valley as the easiest way to be rid of them. The outcome was that before Moira was aware of it, the Valley was beyond any control except by force. The riots and troubles that ensued naturally awakened her distrust and excited her wrath. Sorry Valley was no longer a gentle place of recovery for the weak and diseased. It was a prison.

It had greatly changed during the Reverend Nathan Harrow's nightly work there. He had accomplished a steady withdrawal of its inmates into the normal current of island life. Remained only certain permanent pensioners and a transient crowd of grief-stricken, sick and improvident. Mr. Harrow had had the main house changed into a hospital-sanitarium, and Moira instituted band concerts twice a week and tried to make it appear that the place was really a delightful resort.

Yet the name was one of ill omen, and it was taken in vain in rough phrases. It was a subject of constant mockery. No one would be convinced that it was not a place of punishment, and those compelled to enter it came back to Atui branded with its mark.

Moira went so far as to urge her friends to endure its restrictions for short terms, so that the public might feel that it was really respectable and that it satisfied a longing which even the wealthiest and happiest could not satisfy otherwise. She took pains

208 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

on every occasion to praise its scenery, its air, its separation from the noise and bustle of the city. All in vain, for the police and Dr. Maxwell sent out two unwilling prisoners for every voluntary visitor.

In other respects the City Bureaux seemed to be working well. The jail was empty. Disease had vanished. The streets were thronged with well-dressed people. The workmen on the Reef no longer presented the appearance of a haphazard crowd of disreputables. Visitors spread the fame of Atui as a model community in a salubrious climate under an ideal government.

Three persons only knew on what frail foundations this prosperity rested — Thomas Sanderson, his wife, and Harry Harding. The "King of Atui" and his bride were in constant communication with the outside world. Harding was growing in knowledge of the unseen forces at work in Atui to destroy the City Bureaux.

The couple in the Big House kept to themselves more and more strictly. The new Mrs. Sanderson still shopped and visited, but her tongue was no longer brisk and she refused to speak of current affairs. It became plain that neither her husband nor she considered themselves concerned in Atuan matters, apart from Sanderson's steady pursuance of public works under Harding's superintendence, Harding himself kept his own counsel and was rarely to be seen away from the immediate vicinity of whatever project he had in hand.

So it was that Mr. Harrow became the principal link between the old régime and the new. He had proved an excellent secretary and was now making

himself invaluable as a discreet channel through which Sanderson kept himself informed of his daughter's doings and conveyed to her suggestions as to the future. True, the old man never directly interfered, and it was only occasionally that, at his wife's solicitation, he would remark to Harrow that such-and-such a thing might well be done. In this way he managed that the Court of Atui should affiliate itself with the judicial organisations in the French and German possessions, and that special trading privileges were granted an American firm with high political connections in the United States. By such means he quietly braced the weak foundations.

To Harding, he allowed a single expression of anxiety to pass his lips. "The big colonial powers are always watching for a chance to pick up good islands," he remarked one day. "And they always wait until there is some likelihood of a rebellion so that they can seize a fresh possession under the guise of protecting their commercial interests. Samoa and Hawaii have already lost their independence that way."

"When we have finished the power-plant and the irrigation system, Atui will be a rich prize," Harding assented, and the subject was not raised again between them.

To Moira these later months were prodigiously satisfying. The smiles, friendly words and respect that greeted her, she took as the expression of a real and deep contentment, born of her plan and nourished by her unyielding adherence to the ideals she had chosen. Naturally inclined as she was to well-bred, clean, light-hearted society, it was not long

210 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

before she fell into the habit of thinking that what the score of her intimates said must be the general sentiment of Atui. Inevitably she preferred to trust the good-humoured smile of a dainty Bertha Spinner rather than the frown of an ill-kempt, sullen taro-grinder. So fully was her mind occupied in her newly found companionship and its congenial sympathy that even the memory of her wonderful hour in Sorry Valley was obscured. It faded, like the recollection of a dream.

There was another reason why she allowed that memory to fall into the background. It was the sense that she had almost surrendered to Harding's love for her. In broad daylight and amid her busy assistants she could not understand why this had been so, why she had so hungrily desired to be protected by his strength and firmness. But she was too honest not to admit that the weakness had been there and while she confessed it she was ashamed of herself. She was glad that Harding had neither known of her visit nor approached her since. The moment was past forever.

Bertha Spinner was now her intimate. Together they assembled a court and led it gallantly through balls, picnics, teas, suppers, and moonlight excursions to the leeward shore. Bertha had always been popular for her prettiness and good nature. Moira's beauty and breeding made the combination irresistible to the white youth of Atui and Thomas Sander-son's smile grew grimmer and grimmer as the tales about this joyous society came to the Big House.

He intimated that he thought such revelry ill-timed. "The City Bureaux hardly in running order

and the girl gadding around as if all she had to do was to say something and have it so."

"You're envious," laughed his wife.

"It's you who are envious," he retorted. "Your social reign is over and you refuse to acknowledge that you're cross."

"It's perfectly natural that the young folks should have a good time together," she protested. "What possible harm can there be in it?"

"Wait!" was his laconic reply.

Little by little she saw that her husband was shrewdly watching the trend of affairs. There was no doubt but that the City Bureaux was really coming under the control of the young, gay and thoughtless group. Through Moira, Bertha Spinner and her satellites influenced the government more and more. It became rumoured that city offices might be obtained by discreet courtship of the social arbiters. Atui took it for granted that Miss Spinner and others were able to exile from authority those whom they disliked for any reason.

The good humoured and ambitious Bertha had found two instruments ready to her hand in Dr. Maxwell and Percy Williams.

The doctor had long before fallen a victim to Miss Spinner's peculiar ailments. She had developed an amazing delicacy of the nervous system, resulting in a beautiful and touching fragility. Maxwell had used all his skill to restore health to so precious a patient.

With infinite tact he eschewed the ordinary gross medicines and prescribed colours and sounds. His professional eye had not failed him. The tints he

212 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

used were rare, and Miss Spinner found his suggestions evolved into gowns and wraps of surpassing effect not only on her own health but upon the susceptibilities of strong men. She steadily recovered, and the doctor fell more and more under the influence of his own medicine and ended by being so profoundly in love that he took Miss Spinner's slightest hint as the irrevocable conviction of his own scientific mind.

Once sure of her power, Bertha used it for the most part amiably. But she could not resist the temptation for a subtle and delicious revenge on certain young women who had not paid her due tribute. Dr. Maxwell prescribed blazing scarlets for tender blondes, green for brunettes, and the official arm of the City Bureaux enforced his outraged victims to suffer publicly.

Williams paid court vicariously to Moira through her closest companion. He was shrewd and wary of putting himself too much forward. He hoped to reach the heart of his chief through Bertha, not with any design of awakening love, but merely to assure himself of her firm support and constant faith in him. Bertha knew the precise limits of the young man's purpose and willingly encouraged him by informing him now and then of some act he might perform that would be specially pleasing to Moira. She was delightfully frank on such occasions and had no hesitation in hinting that Miss Sanderson could not very well ask favours and must always maintain an attitude of official impartiality. In confidential moments she might mention the "horrid temper of some of these Atuans" and so trick the chief of police into

a feeling that he must boldly bear the brunt of measures which his superior could wink at but must not openly support.

Moir, of course, felt compelled to allow every subordinate a certain latitude within his own province. She thought that in this way she strengthened the City Bureaux and made it appear less a one-person organisation and therefore less liable to attack by the disaffected.

The inevitable event was that she suddenly found herself responsible for an act she would have avoided at any cost. One day Atui hummed with the news that she had taken revenge on Harry Harding for his defection (the story ran that he had quit the police office because of treachery to her interests) by exiling him to Sorry Valley.

Of all the young men in the city Thomas Sander-son's engineer was the solitary one who not only had not worshipped at Bertha's feet, but had tacitly avoided her. She had gone to great lengths to draw him into her own circle. He had made it plain that his interest lay elsewhere. He had not even called, and this social error was daily counted against him with usury, it being the penalty for such breaches of manners that the original fault is finally swallowed up in the compounded interest. Moir had laughed. She knew that Harding would not risk another snubbing from her. Bertha finally closed the account against the engineer by publicly proclaiming him "impossible."

Half in jest several young men threatened to call him to a reckoning. They remembered the gossip about Harding's dismissal from the police force and

214 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

drew the conclusion that he should have been willing and glad to receive any crumbs that might be tossed him. Bertha's kind invitations were more than crumbs—they were cakes. It became a matter of pride to humble the upstart.

So when Richard Springe, an athlete of great popularity and intimate with the social rulers, was summarily discharged from his place as manager of the electric plant by Harding, the Sanderson-Spinner group felt that a blow had been struck which needed a prompt reply. Springe himself carelessly asserted that his position had been taken away because of his known liking for Miss Spinner's society. He omitted to add the charges made by Harding of neglect of duty, said neglect being consequent on too much devotion to afternoon teas and morning picnics. He was quite truthful in saying that Harding had lost his temper and threatened physical violence. He did not state the immediate cause, which was the careless destruction of two thousand dollars' worth of machinery, freshly installed by the engineer after a month's hard work.

To the proposal that Harding be punished, Moira turned a deaf ear. She gave Springe a place in the City Bureaux but refused to have anything to do with what Bertha called "getting back at the horrid thing." She made the mistake of excusing herself on the ground that Harding had done nothing outside the regulations of the city.

Springe instantly took this as a challenge to him to produce cause for the engineer's punishment. Acting in his new official capacity as head of the bureau of hygiene he ordered Harding to report at the

gymnasium for an hour's exercise each morning. Dr. Maxwell, recalling his former advice to Harding, and being informed that "old Harding looks seedy," readily acquiesced in the prescription he felt to be meant in all kindness.

Harding represented quietly that he was in good health and could not spare the time. He mentioned the fact that he lacked a manager for the electric plant and must fill that position in addition to his other duties. Springe shook his head and insisted that he was powerless under the rules to abate anything in the engineer's favour. Harding saw through the trick, lost his temper, dragged the officious bureau chief into a hallway and there soundly trounced him.

One hour afterwards Percy Williams ordered Sergeant Yama to escort Harding to Sorry Valley, quoting in support of his action a rule that made fighting punishable by exile until surety was given for keeping the peace.

The Japanese treated his former chief with special courtesy and communicated to him the fact that Miss Sanderson knew nothing of the matter. When he had turned his prisoner over to the guard at the entrance, he accompanied him inside to say: "No-o good-ah, sah! Too-oo much-a fool, misdah! Te-yes-s-s! Sah! Pretty soon too much-a trouble-ah! Yes-s-s! Misdah! Sah!" Harding looked at him intently.

"When the trouble comes I shall want you with me, sergeant."

Yama grinned, bowed to the ground and burst into a volley of monosyllables expressive of respect.

216 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Moira heard of the event first over a cup of tea at Bertha's that afternoon. Percy Williams related his part in the affair with subdued relish. "He thought you couldn't catch him," he told her.

"Poor Dick! he won't be presentable for a week!" Bertha sighed. "But it's all in a good cause. How glad I am, Moira, that you're running Atui. Otherwise we might all be murdered in our beds by these wandering thugs!"

"He's no thug," Moira said tartly.

"None of us would be safe if there was no law," Bertha said primly.

Moira shook her head impatiently and turned her cold glance on Williams. "What authority had you to do such a thing?" she demanded, while the others looked on with growing concern.

Williams smiled, careless of her ill-humour. "Rules and regulations made and provided," he replied flippantly. "Harding may be a friend of yours and mine, too, but I have to obey the law."

"That's right, Moira dear," said Miss Spinner, firmly. "If he weren't punished it would look as if you were protecting him. Have a man come in and strike your officials because they're doing their duty? That would never do."

Moira saw she was helpless and suspected that she had been trapped. She said no more and went home. Harrow was waiting for her. The old man looked much perturbed.

"Mr. Sanderson was asking me when he might expect Mr. Harding to be able to go on with the work he is superintending," he remarked slowly. "I thought I would call and see."

Moira stiffened. "When he obeys the law," she responded curtly. "It might have gone worse with him than it has. Now all he has to do is to write a promise and give a bond that he will keep his temper. You can easily see that if I allow his case to pass I shall lose all my influence over the others."

Harrow said no more and left.

Thomas Sanderson glowered over the news for hours. He suspected that Harding was the victim of a plot. Deep in his heart he looked upon the young engineer with almost paternal affection. He loved his trustworthiness and his single-mindedness. He had wished that Moira would appreciate such manliness. This absurd incident seemed to him the work of an impish fiend, destroying as it did any chance for his daughter and the young man to find out each other's amiable qualities.

His wife was more philosophical. "If it's a plot, Moira has nothing to do with it," she averred. "Girls don't take that method with men they've been interested in — Moira has been interested in Harding. Why couldn't the man go courting like any other sensible fellow? Instead, he's simply stood off, as if a proud girl was going to throw herself at his head."

"You rush to conclusions," was the dry response. "It's not a love affair I was interested in. Moira is running Atui, or thinks she is. Harding is superintending my various enterprises. I'll admit that I'd like to see Moira settled down with a good husband. There's time enough for that. What I'm angry with her for is that she has alienated the one man I can depend upon in Atui. And I can't interfere."

218 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"It's a horrible awkward affair," Mrs. Sanderson confessed.

"I know Harding understands my position," he continued. "But he will expect me to come to his rescue. I can't, because Moira would wholly misunderstand me and — there you are. I lose Harding, and Moira merely knocks another prop out from under her government. I'll bet she and that silly crowd think I'm afraid to do anything. Heaven only knows how far they will go!"

His wife kissed him. "I'm going out to see Mr. Harding this evening," she said quietly. "There is a new moon and I'll be back early."

"What are you going for?" Sanderson demanded with a growl.

"I feel very friendly towards him. I am not going to have him think that we don't care what becomes of him. He might think he had to fight all of us."

There was an odd light in Sanderson's eyes as he said, "If Harding once turned to fighting, my dear, he'd lick us all! Don't you make any mistake about *that!*"

On her return he looked inquiringly at her.

"It's all right," she reassured him. "He said he needed a rest anyway. I merely told him how we felt. He didn't say much, but I could see he was friendly. Only —"

"Only what?"

Mrs. Sanderson looked troubled. "I met Judge Jourjon going out there as I was coming away."

There was a lengthy silence and when Sanderson spoke it was merely to mutter, "All right! I sur-

mised as much. I didn't know it would come so soon. I shan't interfere."

"The judge is very shrewd. He wouldn't go to see Harding unless matters were ripe."

They glanced at each other understandingly. Sanderson rose presently and asked for a lamp.

"I must write a couple of letters for Randall to take to Papeete," he explained. "He leaves in the morning."

CHAPTER XXV

IN PERIL

JUDGE JOURJON greeted Harding as if they met on the Parade and not on the porch of a small cottage within a prison valley. The engineer was glad to see his visitor, though much surprised. Mrs. Sanderson's short call had set him seriously to thinking about his present position and the future, for she had guardedly hinted that Moira was being betrayed and asked him a couple of questions which made him assume that she thought him informed of an anticipated change in political affairs. The judge, whom he liked, was the very man to enlighten him.

"The extra-judicial powers seem to be uppermost," the Frenchman remarked, accepting a cigar. "It is a poor case that can't go to court, as they say. Now I can't put the worst kind of criminal into jail without all the formalities. Our friend Williams has no such trouble."

Harding smiled and set the electric drop light where it could attract insects to itself without disturbing them. "A great combination that—the Spinner-Williams-Springe crowd," he said.

"I'm afraid it is very nearly time for Miss Sanderson's friends to step in and help her," was the cautious reply.

"Can one help her?"

Jourjon considered this. "One sees the outcome plainly," he remarked musingly.

"Failure. Not that I feel specially injured myself, but I see how others look at this. So long as the City Bureaux were run without personal animus, one had to sympathise. What angers me is allowing ignorant and bumptious fools to use an institution like that for their own purposes. It makes a noble thing ridiculous."

"Ridicule has killed its thousands," the judge murmured.

"It will kill Moira Sanderson if she once understands that her dearest ideals are laughed at."

"That is the reason I suggested that the time is coming when her *friends* must step in to save her."

"I've seen trouble coming," Harding responded gloomily.

"And you — what is your attitude, my friend?"

Harding blew a puff of smoke ceilingward. "I'm on her side."

"Which is her side? The Spinner coterie?"

Harding glanced at the judge's pale, calm face. "No!" he snorted.

Jourjon waved his hand towards the darkness without. "What — where is the other side?"

The engineer sat up squarely in his chair. "Look here, judge, I've seen a lot and heard a lot more during the past few weeks. Do you realise that under us is a smouldering volcano? Why, there's already an opposition here strong enough to upset this government!"

"Exactly! And I have reason to believe that this — this opposition will act very soon."

222 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"That man Hubbard is one of the leaders, I'll bet," was the immediate assertion. "You know he was kept out here because he squints — lost his job — felt horribly insulted — never forgave it. He's been busy as a bee among the workmen for some time."

"Mr. Hubbard is a very able fellow. He has a large following. Then there is your friend."

Harding looked puzzled. "My friend? Who?"

"Tower," answered Jourjon, evidently enjoying the moment. "He is over on the other island this night, at the head of an armed force."

"A band of cutthroats, I'll warrant," Harding responded carelessly. "I know the kind. They're always waiting. I don't count them. They amount to nothing. But give the people here in Atui a chance — give them a real leader and they'll overturn the City Bureaux and have a new government here in a day's time. So far they haven't found any one to lead 'em. It takes some one who goes into it heart and soul and can't turn back when he's once started."

"I believe they've found a man shrewder than you suppose," Jourjon went on quietly. "My information comes from Papeete. It is the man Mallew."

"Mallew!" echoed Harding. "*Mallew!* I heard he had been sent to the penal colony by the French."

"He — he escaped," Jourjon said gently. "It is odd how they escape when they are needed," he grimaced at his auditor.

"I see," Harding mused aloud. "I do see! I wondered what Mrs. Sanderson was hinting at."

This is a valuable prize, this island of Atui, worth many millions of dollars. The city is ready for rebellion. Rebellion means disorder. Disorder means that foreign interests are jeopardised, foreign war-ships come here and presently a foreign flag flies. Therefore Mallew, a man with a price on his head, is allowed to conduct the first filibuster. Am I right?"

"Quite right!"

"What a crowd it makes!" Harding continued. "Fools, honest men with honest injuries to redress, cutthroats, and conscienceless adventurers! A rogue as leader and martyrs and blackguards at his tail! Man, they would loot this city like a wine-shop. They'd tear it to pieces long before France or any other power could step in. It would be savagery let loose!"

"Precisely. The only respectable faction is the Hubbard crowd. They have injuries which they fancy, justly or not, must be avenged. I came here to-night because the present government has definitely thrust you into the opposition, whether you like it or not. I'm delighted, for my part. I've no need to assure you that I wish Miss Sanderson well, and I'm prepared to defend her as I shall my own family, my own property and my own honour. But she absolutely refuses to consider for a moment by suggestion that she bow to the storm until she is strong enough to face it. She refuses to understand that there is a storm. I argued with her to-night about your case and almost plainly told her that she risked not only the City Bureaux but all Atui by allowing Springe and Williams to carry a high hand. All I

did was to make the poor lady thoroughly distrust me. The time has come to act quickly. You must head the opposition, Harding."

The engineer's voice took on an edge. "With Tower, a drunken reprobate, and Mallew, an unspeakable rogue? Thank you!"

The judge was quite unruffled by this sarcasm.

"You must head the opposition because you are publicly branded as the despised enemy of Miss Sanderson's clique. Therefore, publicly, you are in Hubbard's camp. You are also his employer and you can easily lead him. Do you not see? Draw away Hubbard and the respectable element from Tower and Mallew, and what are they? No longer saviours of a distressed country but pirates. Pirates, whom we shoot and hang!"

Then the judge spent an hour in convincing his auditor that the present situation in Atui demanded the overthrow of the City Bureaux régime. He expatiated on the fact that nothing but a revolution would satisfy the radical faction and a revolution must have before it the hope of a democracy.

"Men won't fight unless they think they can afterwards rule," said Jourjon. "So we say 'Fight with us,' and they fight, if we also say 'Rule with us.'"

To save Atui the judge knew of but one way — to anticipate the rising which was to take place simultaneously with the arrival of Tower and Mallew, get the reins of government firmly in hand and then deal with the filibusters as mere lawless marauders.

"If this is not done," he proceeded, "we confront this situation: a band of adventurers with foreign powers secretly behind them operating in conjunc-

tion with a domestic faction composed of the very sinew of our community. They can't help but succeed. Then the foreign powers will step in, the agreement by which Sanderson holds the island as his own property will be abrogated, a dependent government will be established and the result? — Atui will be degraded into a mere colonial factory to be taxed and exploited to the limit."

The judge would not listen to Harding's objection that such a course would be treacherous to Moira. "We're not dealing with persons and their momentary feelings," he retorted. "I am propounding the only way to save Atui. Would she desire to see this city looted and possibly burned? Has she power to save it? No. Then why consider it treachery to do the solitary patriotic thing?"

"I wouldn't turn on her if my life were at stake," Harding said earnestly. "I would not have her think me disloyal."

"Pooh!" The judge snapped his fingers impatiently. "What does she care about you, my friend?"

Harding shook his head.

"You are in prison, by her order," was the inexorable response.

"She knew nothing of it," he protested.

The judge laughed gently. "Didn't I argue the matter with her myself? But I see you are obstinate. A lover? No offence! But I, I am an Atuan. I will save my city and I will use you, my friend, as my leader." His auditor glanced at him in surprise. But he made no reply. The judge for the moment was a figure of inflexible and amazing strength, domi-

226 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

nant and extraordinarily vital. He went on, in his incisive voice: "If you will allow the mistress of your heart to fall into the hands of a Tower and a Mallew, good! If you will save the peace of us all and rescue Atui from servitude, good! I choose for you, my friend."

Irritated by Jourjon's cool assumption that he was a suitor for Moira's hand the engineer did not, however, fail to see that the judge's argument was sound. It would be impossible, he knew, to prop up the City Bureaux at this moment so that it could stand assaults from without and within at once. That institution was doomed, for the present at least. To save Atui, in some hope that Moira's plans might still have their accomplishment, it was needful to act promptly. The offered plan was best. He resolved to incur the charge of treachery and perfidy in order that he might secure Moira to the utmost of his power. But he listened to the judge's further pleadings so as not to weaken his surrender.

"Harding, I have a daughter, a wife. I must protect them. Personally, the City Bureaux is acceptable to us. But when there comes a war, I insist upon the strong hand to defend. Tell me, who will defend the City Bureaux when Tower and Mallew land their men?"

"The Springes and the Williamses," he said cynically.

"Dick Springe is a good-looking ass!" was the response. "Williams is not only an ass but a coward. Mark me! Williams will stick to the ship only so long as he can hope to be on the strong and popular side."

"Dr. Maxwell, then."

Jourjon smiled. "The good doctor would wish to allay excitement by having everybody put on green shirts. But he will follow you. He is, after all, a man."

"You aren't counting on Miss Sanderson," Harding interposed. "She won't sit idle."

"She must join us," was the reply, given with inflexible determination.

A stare greeted this.

"She must come either willingly or unwillingly," the judge affirmed. "If she will not sacrifice her City Bureaux for the sake of the women and children in Atui, then she must be our prisoner until the affair is over."

Harding groaned. "And how about Sanderson, 'King of Atui'?"

Jourjon rose and joined Harding by the low porch rail.

"Sanderson won't interfere actively," he said in a subdued voice. "I've known him for many years. He is a very wise man, Harding. He has sat in his room in the Big House for a quarter of a century, saying little, unconcerned. And into his ears pours all the gossip of the South Seas. How does he manage it? Don't ask me. I will guarantee that he not only knows all that is brewing here in Atui, but that he knows exactly who is waiting over there in the darkness to pounce on his city and on the wealth he has gathered."

"Then why doesn't he do something? Is he going to sit still and see his daughter disgraced and his wealth stolen and his town looted?"

228 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"He never does anything," Jourjon went on earnestly. "An amazing character! I heard him say once that he waited while other men worked out his salvation with their own. That is true. Sanderson knows that you and I and Sprengl and the decent element here have as much at stake as he has. He feels that we have got our possessions from him, so he tells us, 'Protect it yourselves' He trusts us to play men's parts. If you will only realise it, Harding, he trusts his daughter to us!"

Harding said roughly, "I'll take the job you offer me. When do you think Tower and Mallew expect to strike?"

Jourjon went into details, quoting private letters from Papeete. "Tower went away from Tahiti four weeks ago with fifty beachcombers and a cargo of arms and ammunition. Somewhere he picked up Mallew and fifty more. They have been financed by a syndicate formed by an American from Manila. Atui is a sweet morsel, but there has never been a chance to seize it till now. I know what the outsiders think. They find a strong faction inside opposed to a new government run by a girl. What the diplomats call 'the people's liberties' are infringed, and Sanderson is old and apparently out of the running. It looks easy to these outsiders and they listen with wide ears to the excellent Tower and the gallant Mallew. Now that is as much as I know of their arrangements, except that I am informed that their schooner anchored in a small harbour on the nearest island a week ago. I surmise, therefore, that they have been in communication with the Hubbard party, and for detailed information when they expect to rise

and how they intend to take the city, I'd advise you to go to Hubbard."

"I must handle him carefully," Harding remarked.

"Go to him at once. He has a wife and family. His whole future and theirs depends on the outcome of this. Put the matter to him truthfully. His sole aim is to overturn the City Bureaux to which he traces all his misfortunes. It is too strong for him or for his crowd single-handed. So they have agreed, I think, to join Mallew.

"But give Hubbard and the other workmen a chance for a *coup d'état* under your leadership—give them work to do—allow them no idleness—and they will turn to you as their saviour. Harding, learn what I've learnt by experience: a revolution is easier to direct than to stop. There is no enthusiast like your true revolutionist."

"I'll send for Hubbard at once.—You may yet find it necessary to sentence me to be hanged, judge!"

"You understand that I am with you in this," was the sober response. "See Hubbard at once. Nothing will convince him so quickly that you are in earnest as your determination not to wait for Mallew and Tower before seizing the government from the City Bureaux.

"Remember, it is that institution that he hates. It is dead! You acknowledge it."

Before they parted Harding asked a last question: "Shall you try to make Miss Sanderson see the truth of the matter and prepare her?"

"I've said enough. She must be in complete ig-

230 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

norance of the whole plan," the judge said emphatically. "When she once sees that all is over, she will understand our position and know who her friends are."

"She will never forgive any of us!"

"We shall have saved her," was the simple response. The judge held out his hand and Harding felt the manly warmth in his grasp.

CHAPTER XXVI

PLANNING A COUP D'ÉTAT

AFTER a night spent in maturing his plans Harding knew that he was to stand peculiarly alone in the coming contest. Jourjon was an Atuan, with all his worldly interests staked on maintaining the independence of the city. Hubbard was the enemy of a particular institution—the City Bureaux. These were his allies. Of his enemies Tower was presumably eager for revenge, Mallew for loot; Williams and his friends were sure to look after their own personal interests, without loyalty to any cause or steadiness in the pursuit of any object. If he succeeded—as he was sure he must—he would again be solitary, for Moira would hate him as the instigator of the rebellion, Hubbard would have no further purpose in supporting him and Jourjon would undoubtedly seek only to establish a government which would protect life and property. If he failed, there would be none to mourn him. He faced the alternatives of either making himself master of Atui or complete destruction. He resolved that he would take no half-measures.

When he saw his road plainly before him he addressed all his skill and energy to preparing for the *coup d'état*. Once in possession of the courts, the police and the treasury, he reckoned that within three

232 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

days he could make himself firm in the seat of power. Then the attack by Tower and Mallew, if it came, would serve only to strengthen him. He saw himself autocrat of Atui and in a position to make good terms with all parties, even with Sanderson himself. He left for future consideration what he would do for Moira and the City Bureaux. But he swore in his own heart that Moira should have his devoted service. After all, he loved her. And in this open acknowledgment he gained a courage he could not otherwise have had.

To his great surprise Sprengl arrived at dawn with a packet of papers. Harding greeted the dyspeptic cheerfully. The treasurer told him he had instructions from Thomas Sanderson to stop all work, pay off the labourers and close the shops. "And I brought the accounts for you to check up and approve," he added.

"Evidently the boss thinks I'm here for a long period," Harding jested.

Sprengl nodded and they settled down to business. When it was finished Harding asked the treasurer if he would see Hubbard. "I must have a talk with him," he explained.

"He'll be in with his men for his pay. I'll send him to you.—I don't understand everything that's happening nowadays."

"Any trouble?" Harding demanded quickly.

Sprengl hesitated. But he liked the engineer and he apparently needed some one to confide in when his world was falling to pieces. He sat down again.

"Mr. Sanderson has closed down every bit of work on the island," the treasurer proceeded. "He told

me this morning he did not know when he would put the men to work again. He woke me up and got me out of bed this morning at three o'clock to tell me!"

"Did he give any reason?"

"He never gives any reasons," Sprengl said peevishly. "And you're out here, too! — I can't understand it!"

"My being here is simple enough," was the reply. "I licked that cub Springe."

"But you're the old man's right hand man and Miss Sanderson always set store by you."

Harding laughed.

"It's dangerous, that's what it is!" the treasurer said with emphasis. "Two thousand men out of work! Everything going to pieces! The shops will go bankrupt!"

A thought struck Harding. He had noticed a strange set of figures at the foot of the balance-sheet. He leaned forward and touched Sprengl on the knee. "By the way, did Mr. Sanderson say anything about my account?"

"That's a queer thing! How absurd! After closing down all the work — the reservoir, the new road, the irrigation viaduct and the machine shops — he deposited fifty thousand dollars more to your construction account. I sent the draft away this morning on the schooner. He told me you would need the money for something or other. He even authorised you to overdraw on your own vouchers. Most unbusinesslike!"

Harding's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. "I'll appoint Hubbard, probably, to keep watch on the material," he told Sprengl. "I'll have him set a gang

to work cleaning up and laying the tools and stores away, too. So send him right out to me, will you?"

"I wish you could see your way clear to keeping the men on the pay-roll," the treasurer remarked.

When Sprengl was gone Harding took a short walk to calm his nerves. He knew, now, that Sanderson was behind him. How shrewd the old man was! To close the works and make two thousand disaffected men dependent on him, Harding, for food and shelter! A master stroke! Jourjon was right: the "King of Atui" knew how to gain his ends.

Hubbard soon appeared, sulky and taciturn. His squint gave him a sinister look, not softened by frowning brows. Harding watched him covertly as he came up the path. He saw that he was a hard man to deal with, suspicious and morose. He addressed him briskly, asked about various business details till Hubbard's thoughts were occupied and then plumped out with the remark, "I shall keep you on the pay-roll as usual. Give me a list of the men you think we ought to keep. I have no mind to break up the gangs; it's too hard to gather them again when needed."

Hubbard looked his astonishment. "I thought the orders were to discharge everybody."

"True. Everybody is discharged. But I'm going to re-hire all the good men till we start work again. I'll give full pay for those for whom I can find something to do and I'll give half-pay to the idle."

The foreman digested this slowly, fixing his good eye on his chief. "Of course that's good for us," he said presently.

"And for me," was the prompt response. "I'll need good men presently."

Hubbard seemed suspicious. "What do you expect to set us at?"

"You don't refuse?"

Hubbard saw that his hesitation must seem strange. "Of course not; I was just thinking."

"I've been thinking, too," was the seemingly casual reply. "This is a great place to think in."

A malicious grin twisted Hubbard's mouth. "I spent some time here myself, while you were chief of police and afterwards."

"I'm afraid we're alike in some ways," Harding said lightly. "We both refuse to be cured."

"Some things never can be cured," was the significant answer.

Harding laughed at the ferocity of the tone. "I think I'll tell you what I need good men for," he said brusquely. "Just at present I'm in no mood for fooling, either. There's a pile of trouble coming, Hubbard, and I'm afraid you're on the wrong side."

There was no response to this except a deepening of the lines on the foreman's face.

"I've thought out what I'm going to do," Harding continued. "I'll be frank with you, for I'd like to have you with me. Just hear me out. In the first place, Atui needs a change of government."

"Well?"

"If it doesn't come one way, it must come another. I intend to make it come my way, if I can, and I think I can. I have against me the City Bureaux, the clique that runs them, the social lights and all the

236 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

officials except a few. On my side I ought to have all who want a free city and no favours shown."

Hubbard nodded noncommittally. "You'll have to show the working men that you'll look after their interests."

"I shall," Harding assured him. "But at the very outset I find I have not only the present government to contend with but another and much more troublesome party."

Hubbard glanced up. "And who might they be?" he inquired deliberately.

"You and Tower and Mallew," was the distinct reply. "Tower I know to be a drunken rascal mixed up in a dozen scoundrelly schemes. Mallew is an ex-convict who used to be what is called a gentleman. You are a blamed fool. Tower and Mallew have been provided with money, a schooner and a band of cutthroats by interests who wish to gain control of Atui and exploit it for outsiders. I understand their expedition is over on another island now, waiting the chance to drop over and pillage and loot this city. You're imagining that you want to help them. If they ever get a foothold on Atui, Hubbard, hell will be a summer resort in comparison to this town."

The foreman scowled. "Might I find out where you learned all this?"

"Sure. Everybody in Tahiti knows it. Half Atui knows it. Why shouldn't I?"

Hubbard broke cover. "Look here, Mr. Harding, if you know that much, you know that there are hundreds of people in this town who will see the City Bureaux damned before they'll raise a finger to save 'em."

"The City Bureaux must go," Harding said firmly. "But I beg to state that the people who put themselves in the hands of Mr. Mallew will wish a thousand times they had the City Bureaux back — and I'm no friend of the institution which has me out here, a prisoner. But once let trouble start in the way you propose, and within a week you'll have the German warships down here and you'll lose Atui forever. It will be a slave-driver's paradise, not a white man's home. You've seen other islands, haven't you?"

"I always did say that old man Sanderson ran things *right*," Hubbard said stoutly. "I'm for the old man. But he is letting things drive like a ship before a gale. Look at that puppy chief of police! — look at all the other upstarts who treat decent working men like dirt under their feet." The foreman cursed them feelingly.

Harding brought him to the point. "Hubbard, I've got money. I've got the best men back of me — some of 'em high in office here — and I mean to fight. First, I'm going to seize the police force, which I can handle, I know. Then I'm going to shut up the City Bureaux, abrogate the present regulations, empty this valley and govern Atui so that every citizen can call his soul his own and have a hand in the choice of his officers. Within a week I'll start the works again, pay full wages and make the city hum with prosperity. If you insist on going your own way, — no work, no pay, and no one to go to. That'll be your fix. Come with me and I'll right your wrongs and then we'll handle this Tower-Mallew gang without gloves. Take your choice. Take

238 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

your choice. Be with me and have back your job, your freedom and your home. Fight me, and the works won't open, there won't be a cent in Atui and you'll have to look to Tower and Mallew for your bread and butter. I'm Mr. Paymaster in Atui."

Hubbard grinned. "It looks to me as if Thomas Sanderson, Esquire, wasn't far away."

"Don't you make any mistakes about who is going to be the boss of Atui," was the curt reply. "I'm not going into this to lie down afterwards and lick somebody's hand. Let there be no mistake about *that*." He smiled confidently. "I've been looking around for some time for a government to manage. Atui suits me perfectly."

The foreman nodded. "All right. I understand the matter. I'll see my friends. Of course we'd rather see Atui in your hands than in the power of outsiders. So long as it's understood that the City Bureaux is dead, I suppose the boys will back you up. Especially if you're the paymaster!"

Harding rose. "One thing, Hubbard," he said briefly, "no matter what you and your party decide, understand that Tower and Mallew don't set foot on Atui without bloodshed. Some one is going to get killed. When there's killing afoot it pays to be on the right side."

Their eyes met. Hubbard held out a calloused hand. "I can't speak for anybody but myself. I'll do my best. You don't know —" He choked.

Harding's cold voice took him up. "I don't know what?"

The expression on the foreman's face was an extraordinary mingling of rage, shame and defiance.

"It was my wife," he said, after a gulp. "She always thought I was — she didn't mind my being cross-eyed. She was kind of proud of her husband. When I was arrested because I was too ugly for delicate people to look at, it — it —" He stared savagely at Harding. "It hurt her," he managed to say finally. "No woman likes to have people sneering at her man. She — she doesn't look at me any more, if she can help it. And the children feel the same way, too, I guess."

His depth of feeling changed the comedy of his preposterous confession into grim tragedy. As the foreman departed Harding gazed after him with a helpless sense of the enormous part trifles play in our world. A squint was bringing the downfall of a government.

Hubbard had promised to report definite details of the plans of the conspirators on the schooner, and Harding had engaged to act promptly as soon as he was in possession of needed facts. Meanwhile he saw nothing to do but to be patient.

Two days passed and he was visited neither by Jourjon nor by Hubbard. On the third night he decided that there had been treachery. It stirred his temper into a blaze. Every hour was precious. He would act alone. If he must execute a *coup d'état* single-handed, he would strike instantly and leave the issue to the future. He dressed himself carefully, locked up his few belongings and prepared to leave Sorry Valley before the dawn.

CHAPTER XXVII

TOWER'S RETURN

THE moon had set when he left the little cottage and made his way down the dark road to the entrance. He was determined to leave his prison boldly, trusting to his acquaintance with the policemen on guard. He found at the gate only Sergeant Yama.

Without preliminaries Harding said to him: "Yama, I must get to the city this morning. I'm in charge of the police force again. Come along."

The Japanese saluted. Any suspicions he may have had seemed needless in the face of his accompanying the man who had been his prisoner. Harding noted his quick obedience, nodded and passed on out. The sergeant threw his rifle to his shoulder and followed him.

They had gone a bare mile towards Atui, and the grey of the dawn was flowing over the sky when Harding saw a man far down the road, running with his head between his shoulders and his arms driving back and forth. Soon he heard the weary beat of the man's feet on the hard pavement. He thought he recognised Hubbard.

It was Hubbard. When they were face to face the foreman gasped out, "The schooner is coming into the bay! Too late! We were fooled!"

Harding waited till the messenger had recovered his breath, walking steadily onward the while. At last Hubbard became coherent. His story was brief. He had taken Harding's proposal and laid it before the band he led. They had considered it, decided to wait until they knew the precise plans of Tower and Mallew, and then sent a scout to find what they were arranging to do. The scout had not returned. Hubbard had discovered at the last moment that dissatisfied members of his faction had immediately informed Mallew what was brewing. It was evident that both Tower and Mallew recognised the necessity for immediate action, for Hubbard had seen the schooner's lights at midnight. A native had reconnoitred in a canoe and reported the presence of many armed men.

"The boys kept arguing whether you wouldn't stick by Miss Sanderson," Hubbard explained. "I went your bail you were true blue. But they've been badly fooled and distrusted you."

"Have they all joined Mallew?" Harding demanded.

Hubbard shook his head. "I've got forty who stick by me. We're all together down at the big warehouse on the Reef — we've been there all night. I think Tower landed on the leeward side of the island last night or yesterday afternoon. They wouldn't let me know their plans because they didn't think me safe any longer; but two hundred of our people went across the island yesterday afternoon and that means they expected to meet Tower."

"Do you know how many men Tower and Mallew have?"

242 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"The old plan was that Tower should have fifty men, land near the Leeward Plantation, seize it, be joined by volunteers among the hands and march across to meet Mallew, who was to land here and capture the treasury and the City Bureaux."

"We'll reckon they are following that plan," Harding answered. "Now we're in a bad pickle, Hubbard. Our hand is forced. It's too late to get control of Atui and show an undivided front to the enemy. Nobody would actually know on what side he was on. If the present officials find out what is happening, they will instantly prepare for trouble by talking and planning and scheming and fussing and discussing — and they'll do nothing. So we'll simply leave 'em out of our calculations. What we've got to do is to chase Tower and Mallew away. I'll take charge of the police and you have your forty men. We must prevent the schooner's landing any of its crowd and we must drive Tower back across the divide. That will mean some fighting. But we can lick 'em and then we'll turn our attention to Atui and the City Bureaux."

"The schooner will land at the pier," Hubbard said. "Mallew doesn't know there is any opposition. He thinks he's surprised the place."

"So much the worse for Mallew. Have you any arms?"

"A few. We must have more. We have plenty of cane-knives and the dynamite we use for blasting — if that's any use to us."

"Come with me and I'll provide you with rifles," Harding said. "The police station is full of 'em, thank Fortune! Equip your men and station your-

self at the pier-head, right in the little square. Keep Mallev from landing. I'll tend to the rest."

They came on a hack drawn up by the curve with its driver asleep inside. Sergeant Yama quickly woke the man, and the three of them got in and were driven at a gallop to the police station. There Harding found Lieutenant Morden, the promoted loungee at the Reef, directing the energies of a prisoner with mop and broom. To him Harding said sharply, "I'm in charge again, Morden. I've brought Sergeant Yama back with me. We've got an hour to save Atui in." He drew him aside and told him calmly of the plot that was about to be hatched into a full-fledged revolution. Morden listened and nodded. "I see! Well, I owe Miss Sanderson everything, and I guess we can save the little lady her town. I'm with you!"

"Call in your men. Wake up the morning relief and have them report instantly. Give them rifles and keep them right here."

Morden saluted. Harding summoned the Japanese. "Sergeant Yama, take three dozen rifles and ammunition for 'em and go with Mr. Hubbard to the Reef and help him arm his men."

"Good-ah, Misdah!" said the sergeant, grinning, and sped on his mission. A moment later Harding heard the hack driven furiously away and knew that five minutes more would put Hubbard in command of a sturdy and well-equipped force. He went into the inner office and prepared himself for the morning's work. Two revolvers, a knife and a cartridge-belt were quickly adjusted. Then he ripped off his coat, snatched up a spare uniform jacket, put on Wil-

244 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

liams's cap, belted on a cutlass and went outside. He saw Morden busily receiving the incoming policemen, and dressing each man, as soon as he was armed, in rank in the drill-hall. Harding glanced at the clock. It was half after six. Within half an hour he would have sixty able policemen at his command. He sat down at the outside desk and wrote down a list of names.

When Sergeant Yama returned Harding handed him his paper.

"Take three men and go to the Red House in a hack," ran his swift orders. "Leave your men there and tell Miss Sanderson either to stay there or to go to the Big House, but not to come down-town."

"Ver-r-ry good-ah, sah!"

"Then take this list and bring the persons whose names are down on it here to me, one by one. Sharp now!"

The Japanese read the names aloud. "Misdah Williams, Misdah Springe, Misdah Spinner, Misdah Judge Jourjon, Misdah Doctah Maxwell!"

"Correct," said Harding, and dismissed him. Then he detailed another man to go for the Reverend Mr. Harrow.

At this juncture Hubbard panted in to report that his men were assembled.

"Place 'em as I told you," Harding ordered. "Better make some sort of a breastwork to fight behind, if you have to fight. The road Tower will come down joins the Parade just at that point, so you'd better be ready to face both ways, in case both forces attack you at once."

"I may thank my stars that I'm cross-eyed," the foreman growled and departed.

The first of the men Sergeant Yama had on his list arrived half-clad and spluttering wild oaths. When he saw Harding he raged in the policemen's tenacious grasp. Harding said curtly, "No use, Williams!" and ordered him to a cell. Springe followed and was not allowed a word of protest before being thrust into another cell. Then the trader, Spinner, arrived in a state of high indignation. Harding knew the man but slightly, yet he was struck by the peculiarly furtive air beneath his wrathful words. He drew him aside, for he thought he detected a guilt on the trader's face that could have only one explanation.

"Three words only, Spinner," he said briefly. "I will allow you your liberty on one condition. Go to Mallew and make it plain to him that an invasion of Atui this morning will be fruitless. Tell him he can't land at the pier. I think you know him well enough to persuade him. You might buy him off. You are well-to-do. Go and spend some of your money to save Atui and I'll let you go."

"Preposterous!" was the outraged man's response. "You talk like a crazy man! That schooner is a peaceful vessel, a trading craft. Nothing threatens this city except yourself, and you are supposed to be in jail. You will answer for this, young fellow!"

"Ah, ha!" said Harding coolly. "So you're in on Mallew's scheme, are you? You're so sure that schooner is peaceful! Who said it wasn't?" Harding's tone became so savage that Spinner re-

246 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

coiled. "And you used your own daughter as a cat's-paw! And thought you'd hoodwink Miss Sanderson into putting Atui defenceless, so you could step in and grab the money! I'll deal with you later, Spinner. You're at the end of your rope this morning."

"I appeal to the authorities, I —"

Harding waved his hand and the trader was hustled away. Harding turned to greet Dr. Maxwell, whose face exhibited every degree of astonishment and perplexity. "I want to know whether you will help me save Atui and ask no questions?" was the curt demand on him.

"Save Atui?" repeated the bewildered physician.

Harding coolly lit a cigarette. "I'll explain, doctor." He related the plot now in course of execution by Tower, Mallew and their sympathisers. Maxwell listened gravely, saying at the end of the narrative, "It sounds perfectly absurd! In this day and age!"

"Days and ages don't seem to make much difference with human nature," was the response. "You're going to see the real thing, doctor. These pirates are desperate. The Powers have a way of hanging the unsuccessful filibuster just as they have of secretly rewarding the successful one. It will be civil war, as well, if the whole affair is not ended pretty soon. I know the men who will join Tower and Mallew if they once get a foothold. They're men sure they'll be doing the right thing. We must save them from so awful a mistake."

"What shall I do?"

"I'll make you a non-combatant. Take six po-

licemen, Lieutenant Morden in charge, and go to the Big House by way of the Red House. I've already sent word to Miss Sanderson to stay at one or the other. She sent me no word back and very likely she has very little faith in me, anyway. But you can persuade her to lie quiet till this rumpus is over."

Dr. Maxwell pondered a moment. "I shall call and get Miss Spinner, too."

"All right! Only — on no condition allow Miss Sanderson to be seen down-town. I tell you, I can't answer for her safety a moment if she is seen on the streets. You can tell her the City Bureaux is at the bottom of all this trouble and that I can only keep my men together by proving to them that I won't betray them to it. I'm going to protect her, but the only way I can do so and save Atui is by keeping her entirely out of this. Tell her I'm handling this matter and to trust me. Now hurry!"

By this time Atui was awakening to the fact that something out of the ordinary was happening. The Parade began to fill with curious, excited people. Harding quickly threw out police lines and instructed his officers to warn all citizens to go back to their homes. He took pains to go amid the gathering crowds himself and explain matters to a leading man here and there. In this way he picked up a few volunteers whom he could trust. These he gave stars to and set to work controlling the throng which gave signs of turning into a mob. When he saw that these measures were effective he returned to the police station and met Jourjon and Harrow. He caught the judge's eye. They nodded understandingly to each other. Harding took Harrow into a

corner. He began to explain the situation when the missionary held up his crooked hand. "I know sufficient of the business," he said harshly. "I came to ask that I might help to battle with the wicked men who would destroy our city and undo a noble work."

"Good!" said Harding cordially. "Come with me."

Jourjon joined them and they walked briskly down towards the pier. Hubbard met them and pointed proudly to his men, who were engaged in erecting a low wall of rock and bags of sand, old ship-ballast. Harding nodded approval and turned Harrow over to Hubbard. The foreman was much abashed.

"This is no place for a man of your cloth, sir," he mumbled.

Harrow sighed. "There will be need of my services, I greatly fear."

Hubbard offered him a revolver. The missionary refused it. "I will stay and use my own arms," he said.

The foreman was much worried. "Now don't weaken my men by preaching peace," he pleaded. "This is a fight for our homes."

Harrow drew himself up. "I am here to save souls. Perhaps I may turn those rash men from their sinful purpose. I will try."

This brought a slight smile to the foreman's face. "I don't think those chaps on the schooner will listen," he remarked and hurried away.

The position chosen to confront the invaders was a level, gravelled piece of ground, back of which were a few small buildings on either side of a road that debouched here from the mountain. It gave

directly on the pier where Harding and Jourjon now stood with anxious eyes on the schooner. The vessel was now inside the pass and reaching for the pier.

It was a lovely morning, filled with wind and colour. During his few moments of waiting Harding looked back at the dark peak of Atui, at the clouds rolling before the upper breeze. Peace was in the air. It was unbelievable that the Sabbath stillness was so soon to be cruelly shattered. The schooner slipping up the tide looked inoffensive. All this tumult and preparation was a dream. Harding stared into the shimmering distance, suffused with languor, immeasurably content in idleness.

Jourjon's keen tones recalled him.

"My friend, you have moved briskly!"

He started and glanced at the judge's old-fashioned military dress. "I see you are ready for the fray."

Jourjon smiled. "I tried to find you at Sorry Valley this morning. I went out as soon as I heard that Tower was landed on the leeward side. It appeared that you had escaped. I suspected your purpose. I am glad. The early bird catches the worm. — As an old artillery officer I approve of your arrangements."

"I wish we had a machine gun," Harding replied.

"Or any old pot that would hold powder and bullets," the judge added. "But we must do our best. A good carpenter is known by his shavings, not by his tools. We shall do our best."

"Your family?"

"I sent them to the Big House. Sprengl went up

there, armed to the teeth." Jourjon lit a cigarette. "He has a stomach for fighting if not for food," he said quaintly.

Harding shook his head. "There is one thing that seriously worries me," he said. "I fear they will set fire to the town. Anybody might do it."

"If they do it will burn," was the philosophic reply. "Mallew is certainly wise enough to know that a conflagration would be of the greatest assistance to him. We shall be at a loss if it comes to street fighting with the whole populace in an uproar, and the enemy knows it.— Have you seen Miss Moira?"

"She is a prisoner at the Big House. Dr. Maxwell and some policemen are on guard there."

"Your *coup d'état* has somewhat astonished certain friends of ours," the judge proceeded. "You have them all in jail?"

"Tight as a cork in a bottle. I wish I could pen up a few hundreds of the citizens and keep the streets cleared for fighting. I don't want to have any of the non-combatants either hurt or killed, for it would make our task doubly hard afterwards."

"We must prevent that schooner from landing," was the calm reply. "My friend, ten minutes more will bring her alongside the pier."

"They have the French flag flying!" Harding grumbled. "Impossible to fire on them till they make a demonstration."

Jourjon hitched up his sword belt. "I am also judge of the French Courts, since the affiliation three months ago," he said quietly. "As an authority I will command them. We will forbid them to set foot on Atuan soil, my friend. Forward!"

They started down the pier side by side, cigarettes between their lips, eyes directed straight ahead. For the first time Harding realised that he was taking part in a tremendous affair. His fingers trembled on the hilt of his cutlass. There was a strange constriction in his throat. He glanced at his companion, from the corner of his eye. The judge stepped along as undisturbed as if going to his seat in the court-room. There was a serene dignity, a self-reliance in his manner that bespoke the man doing his duty carefully and honourably. It struck Harding that Jourjon represented order, the power that kept safe his wife, his household, his property — all the wives, households and property in Atui. The two of them were the envoys of civilisation going to confront rapine and licence and savagery. Their short walk down the pier was five minutes of glory, five minutes during which they stood forth as the representatives of a world that sought peace and pleasantness, that abhorred battle and bloodshed, that through untold ages had suffered always to triumph, that could suffer again and yet again before it gained its inevitable and final victory. He held his head high.

They reached the end of the pier and halted. The schooner was slowly drifting in. Along its low rail dirty faces, bared arms and crisped hands showed. On the quarterdeck a tall, spare man dressed in a cotton shirt and duck trousers stood talking to an equally tall but stooped fellow with a rifle in the hollow of his arm. Jourjon indicated the first. "That's Mallew," he murmured. "He's wondering whether we are come to welcome him. He cannot understand that the city is alarmed and ready to

252 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

repulse him." Then he added, "Better speak to him!"

Harding raised his voice and called across the lessening interval, "You can't come to the pier, you must anchor in the bay."

Mallew stepped to the rail and answered in a sardonic tone that carried clearly, "Is the whole army down to meet us?"

Harding flushed. Jourjon stepped forward. "As a French official I forbid you to approach the pier. You are under the French flag and subject to my orders."

Mallew waved his hand negligently. There was a stir throughout the schooner. Jourjon perceived the meaning of this and drew himself up. In a voice that could be plainly heard aboard the schooner he remarked to his companion: "That rogue has half the cutthroats of the South Seas with him. Thieves, robbers, gamblers, drunkards and gutter-birds! What a crew! Worthy of their convict commander! They will hang high!"

The answer to this was exactly what the judge wished: a couple of hasty bullets spat against the steel spiles at their feet. He raised his voice:

"You will be treated as pirates!"

With that he turned on his heel and started slowly for the shore. Harding followed him, squaring his shoulders but inwardly awaiting the thud of the bullet he was sure must strike him.

No other shots were fired, for Mallew realised that he had been put in the wrong. For a vessel flying a friendly flag to fire on the authorities of Atui meant retribution swift and heavy. There was but one re-

course now — to make himself speedily master of the city, and from that elevation deal with coming events. Jourjon and Harding heard his loud imprecations and orders.

As they walked back, once more shoulder to shoulder, the judge made the simple remark that the pier was almost exactly nine hundred feet long.

"Let 'em come to within three hundred feet before your men fire," he advised. "Undisciplined men don't relish either long-range work nor hand-to-hand conflict. I doubt whether Hubbard's workmen could do any damage at two hundred yards. They will certainly run if they allow Mallew to get closer than fifty."

These calculations were instantly upset. The schooner had slipped alongside the pier, and Mallew instantly poured his force out and urged them to rush the town. He had not caught the significance of the little fortification at the head of the pier.

The judge saw his manœuvre and realised its portent. He jerked Harding's arm and started on a run. "We mustn't get caught between the two of 'em!" he cried. "Hubbard won't fire and Mallew will be on top of 'em in a second." Harding heard and dashed after him. They leaped the little way not two hundred feet ahead of their closest pursuers.

Hubbard was not slow to see the emergency. His men fired into the rushing crowd, stopped it and drove it back by a second volley. Harding saw a few bodies scattered along the pier. He nodded to Hubbard. To Jourjon he said, "Mallew and Tower

must have appointed a certain time to meet each other here. Tower is due."

"I'll stay here," said the judge, drawing his revolver. "If he comes down the road we can hold him a while. But for God's sake hurry up with your police!"

Harding dashed across the Parade and a hundred yards up the mountain road. No one was in sight. Tower was late and Mallew helpless for the moment. Ten minutes more and the schooner could be captured. He ran back and waved a reassuring hand to the judge. Jourjon pointed imperiously towards the centre of the town. A prodigious cry was rising from the heart of Atui. Harding stared up the broad way. A column of smoke shot skyward. He had been outwitted. Tower had come round the island and taken him in the rear. The city was on fire.

Hubbard rushed out to him, his face almost animal in its ferocity. "Leave the schooner to me!" he shouted.

"Can you manage?"

Hubbard showed his white teeth in a tigerish snarl and ran back to his men.

The next fifteen minutes were never to become plain to Harding's memory. He dashed up the wide, empty Parade, cutlass clanking at his heels, a revolver in his left hand. He saw with perfect distinctness the huddle of people far ahead of him. He heard, as if through the telephone, the occasional crack of rifles behind him. The cloud of smoke hung motionless in the sky, bent before the wind. His feet steadily padded on the gravel. Suddenly the crowd

far ahead of him was miraculously around him. It enveloped him. He plunged on, driving his shoulders against jostling men, smelling their human odour, feeling their hot breath on his cheeks. He emerged again into a vacant street. The dark throng — or was it another? — was still ahead of him. To his right the police station lifted its stone walls. Ahead and on the left flames crackled about the City Bureaux. He turned in towards the station. On the step stood Sergeant Yama.

Harding shouted to him. The Japanese did not respond. With a curse the engineer leaped the intervening space. He drew himself up in utter amazement. Behind the policeman stood Moira Sanderson with Percy Williams and Dick Springe. Both men were armed. Springe was aiming a revolver at him.

His mind instantly recovered its alertness. He saw the explanation of this astounding circumstance. Moira had refused to be a prisoner, had used her authority with Morden and the doctor and come down-town to effect the release of Williams and Springe. Where were his police? He glanced up the Parade. He saw his precious, sorely needed force, arms thrown aside, struggling with a hose cart and trying to throw a stream of water on the blazing City Bureaux.

From beyond them he heard the shouts of the mob, the crackling of rifles and explosion of revolvers. Tower was there with his looters! — Tower wasting time in wild excesses of noise and pillage under the impression that Mallew was already in possession of the town. What a priceless opportunity to save

Atui gone! Well, he thought bitterly to himself, let the policemen labour ineffectually! Let Tower have his triumph! All was lost! He thrust his revolver into his belt, took out a cigarette and looked carelessly over the group before him.

"If I were you, Springe, I'd put that gun down," he said coldly.

Moir's flaming eyes crossed his. "Oh, you traitor!" she breathed.

He nodded. "It's all over but the shouting," he remarked with curious tenderness for her. "I'm sorry for you! also for poor Hubbard and Jourjon!"

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"You knew nothing about it, of course," he assented, wearily. "You'll know pretty soon!"

Williams thrust himself forward. "You're under arrest!" he shouted. "Get in there! I'll lock *you* up before you do any more damage!"

"You'd a great deal better be preparing to save Miss Sanderson's life," was the contemptuous reply.

A terrific report drowned the answer, if there was one. The building rocked above them. Bits of plaster and stone rattled on the pavement. Moira cried out. Harding grinned savagely into Springe's pallid face. "That's good old Hubbard and his dynamite!"

"Something blew up?" Moira demanded, digging her fingers into his arm. "Tell me what it was before it's too late!"

He looked down at her reassuringly. "Didn't Maxwell tell you what I said? Treachery! That's what it is. That's Williams's friend Tower burning your building. Mallew and a schoonerful of cut-

throats are attacking the town at the lower end and my men are trying to drive them off."

He saw that she did not believe him.

Suddenly the tumult and the noise seemed concentrated into a hoarse chorus of yells. They looked up the Parade. They saw the policemen and their line of hose tossed aside like chips before a wave. A compact, shouting, yelping column of men burst through, cheering wildly, shaking their fists at the burning building, firing their rifles at it. They poured past and towards the police station.

"This ends it," Harding said, amazed at his own coolness. "Sergeant Yama!"

The Japanese turned his eyes on his old commander.

"We've got to save Miss Sanderson, sergeant. No good! Must fight chop-chop!"

The sergeant glanced at Williams and Springe. Apparently he saw nothing to enlist his obedience in their pallid faces and shifting eyes. He saluted Harding. "Yes-s-s, Misdah!" he said calmly, drew his revolver and stepped back on the other side of Moira. They three stood motionless.

"They *must* go by," Harding muttered furiously to himself. "Hubbard and Jourjon have handled the other crowd by this time. Maybe then can handle this band, too. Only let them get by here!"

A thought struck him. His quick eyes told him that Williams and Springe were dazed, hypnotised into readiness for any suggestion. He swung on them. "See those men coming? They're bound to seize the city. They've got us if they think we're enemies. You have one chance. See Tower? Your

old friend is at their head. Join him! He's your only safety!"

Williams's sodden expression lightened. "It is Tower!" he exclaimed joyously. "Of course! I knew it! Come on! Hurrah!" He ran out, followed by Springe.

"Now," said Harding, looking at Moira's bewildered face, "they will go by." He touched the Japanese on the arm and he stepped back.

It was the psychological moment when the young men dashed out with cries of "Tower! Tower!" The men in loose ranks fixed their eyes on this meeting and did not see the group in the great doorway. The mob — liquor and rapine had taken away even the appearance of orderliness — streamed past, all eyes upon the figures ahead. Williams and Springe were already firing their revolvers wildly into the air. Harding thought grimly of the reception awaiting them when they confronted Hubbard. He could have wished no better leaders for an army he wished to see annihilated.

To Moira the long minutes stretched into an eternity of terror. Instinct told her — too late! — that she was looking on the lawless passions of the abyss. Harding had not lied to her, after all. Now, strung to the last pitch of her forces she gazed past Harding's motionless shoulder at bestial faces, filthy rags and taloned hands. She heard the din of hoarse, animal cries, foul yells, incredible vile oaths. Gaunt and demoniacal brutality streamed by like an infernal flood of pollution. Sound and sight, every sense of her was abused by the awful scene. Its fetor dizzied

her. With piteous fingers she hung to the tense, hard muscles of the impassive Japanese and the rock-like engineer. She knew that once those rolling, tigerish eyes saw her, once the beast gave tongue for its prey, she was lost.

As if through a vile mist she saw in fancy still the dancing images of her chief of police and Dick Springe, crazed revellers in the midst of this awful mob. And that lesson in human weakness and villainess, this appalling treachery of men she had trusted, made even the sunlight seem sickly. Then in great waves of nausea she forgot Atui, the City Bureaux, the past and the future. She knew only that she was helpless and alone, in utter agony of terror, and that only two silent figures stood between her and death, while its fiery flood licked the very steps on which she stood.

The last broken rank of the freebooters jostled by. Followed a rabble of drunken, screaming, hysterical natives. She saw their upturned savage faces, faces of men and women, of youth and elders, lit with the primeval fires of obscene and unreined passion. She heard their raucous cries, their unspeakable vile mouthings. These, too, did not see her. Their eyes were set in their heads. They stared in foul, blind frenzy at some invisible goal.

She felt the arms she clutched heave under her. Harding's staccato voice said, "Now! Yama!" and she was carried across the Parade with a rush and up a by-road. The tumult and the rioting were behind her. She was gently set down. She saw Harding's gentle eyes. "Can you stand a moment?" he said.

260 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

She found her trembling limbs unable to support her. Harding spoke again, firmly. "You must try to walk, Moira. We have some distance to go."

"Where?" she asked wildly, in sudden panic-terror.

"To your father's house — to the Big House."

Yama's quick voice broke in, "Misdah! More coming! No good-ah man, sah!"

She was let fall to her knees. She heard the rapid beat of runners. Around the bend in the road ahead came a little squad of armed men, shouting. Harding's revolver cracked viciously. She saw two men fall, as if they had stumbled. A third stopped cunningly, like a man who sees his enemy in ambush. Then he, too, tripped and sprawled out, a motionless blot on the white surface of the street. The rest advanced, slowly. Sergeant Yama discharged his revolver and they fled.

Moira rose unassisted. She was no longer bewildered. She knew what was happening. She and Harding and Yama were fighting their way to safety, to the Big House. It was quite simple. She felt strong again. She met Harding's tender, slightly puzzled gaze. "I'm all right now," she said. "Give me one of your guns."

Without a word he drew his second revolver and handed it to her. She caught the admiring flash in Yama's eyes. She took a step forward.

Abreast, the three of them approached the bodies in the road at a steady pace, passed them and went around the curve. Far ahead they saw the Big House standing austere white amid the greenery of the

mountain side; apart, vigilant, secure. She pointed to it.

"That's where you belong," Harding said.

From the town behind them rose a sudden crackling sound, crisp, nervous, bitter. "Hubbard's at 'em again," was Harding's comment.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a solitary figure appeared under the trees ahead of them. "Papa! papa!" cried Moira.

He came towards them sedately. A rifle rested in the crook of his arm. A revolver bulged the pocket of his thin jacket. He smiled on the trio. "All safe?"

"Oh, it was awful!" Moira groaned, her newfound strength ebbing quickly.

Sanderson glanced at Harding.

"Hubbard is still holding them at the pier. Journey is with him.—Anything wrong at the House?"

"Everything is all right," Sanderson replied.

"Then Yama and I will go back. We're needed."

"How many have you?"

Harding grinned. "I did have forty men under Hubbard and sixty policemen. I've lost my policemen. I guess Sergeant Yama and I are about all that are left. I fancy the town will burn."

Sanderson nodded. Then, with a queer smile, he held out his hand, lean and brown and steady. Harding shook it and turned round to start back. Moira's whisper stopped him.

"You will be killed!"

He smiled reassuringly. "Not I! We mustn't leave poor Hubbard to do it all! Good-bye!"

262 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Sergeant Yama fell into step two paces in the rear of his commander. They marched away, silently and unhurriedly, down the road, without looking back.

Moirá stood beside her father and watched them till they were gone round the curve. She still held Harding's revolver in her slackened fingers.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DYNAMITE

HARDING chose a roundabout road to bring him into the open below the position which Hubbard was still holding under a heavy fire. He came out upon the Parade a couple of hundred yards beyond the little breast-works. He saw that it was on the point of being carried by mere force of number. He touched Sergeant Yama on the arm and they dived once more into the trees and made their way swiftly along the edge of the Parade, past the fort and to within a score of yards of the flank of the attacking party. He glanced at the Japanese. Yama smiled meaningly as a bullet clipped a branch over his head.

"It's close quarters for us," Harding muttered. "No time to lose! Come on!"

They slipped down a slender path to the edge of the Parade. Here a hedge gave them some shelter. Yama crouched down, rifle in hand and cartridge belt handy. Harding took his position a few feet away, first taking both rifle and belt from a body that lay half under the hedge.

A moment later Tower realised that an unseen force was turning the tide of battle against him. The very strength of his numbers now proved a disadvantage, for Harding and Yama were good shots

and their bullets were directed by the knowledge that tall heads falling means demoralisation in a mob.

Hubbard had lost few of his little force, owing to the care with which he kept his men under cover. But the impetus of the dense mob behind the attacking force had been slowly but surely thrusting it over his little fortification by pure weight of mass, in spite of a murderous fire. But his ammunition was giving out, and both the foreman and Jourjon were preparing for their last stand in a hand-to-hand conflict.

The work of the two hidden men not only weakened the impact of the crowd of crazed and drunken rioters behind, but quickly thinned out the front rank of the freebooters. Harding was aiming at Tower, and his bullets were finding billets among his immediate followers. Yama was firing quickly and steadily, choosing his men. Three minutes of this made Tower draw back, his followers dodging to the rear and seeking shelter behind every little vantage point. There was left a clear space of thirty yards between the rude breastwork and the foremost of the invaders.

"A little more, and we'll have them on their way," Harding muttered, throwing in a fresh clip. "Hello!"

Out of a group huddled in the partial cover of a house by the roadside a man ran waveringly, revolver in hand. It was Percy Williams, eyes filmed with terror, trying blindly for safety. Instead of going to the rear he was crossing the Parade and making directly for the pier. Before Harding could put out a restraining hand, Yama laid his rifle barrel gently along his forearm and pulled the

trigger. The chief of police stopped, as if he had forgotten something, pulled out a torn handkerchief and wiped his flat face. His revolver slipped from his other hand. With a ridiculous expression of astonishment he opened his mouth, stuffed the handkerchief into it and collapsed. The Japanese inserted a fresh clip into the breech of his rifle and prepared to resume his sharpshooting, when a mark should be given.

Unconsciously the two men had crept forward through the hedge until now they lay in full view of the redoubt. Harding saw Hubbard busy over something; while Jourjon was evidently directing the riflemen in some new manœuvre. He glanced at the attackers. They were being reformed by Tower, whose gross figure seemed animated by amazing energy. Across the road he saw a blackened figure seated behind a large stone and working over a jammed breech-lock. It was Mallew. Beyond him Harding saw the partly submerged hull of the schooner, careened on its side and evidently badly shattered. He chuckled at the sight, knowing that Hubbard had used dynamite with skill and effect. But the chuckle died in his throat when he realised that the crucial moment had arrived.

Tower, with his band once more in rank, was preparing to make a final attack on the devoted little fortress. A glance at the grimy faces, retracted lips and tense forms of the outlaws told of their desperation. This onrush would be no mild affair. Could Hubbard resist it? He loosened his own cutlass and spoke to Yama. But before the Japanese relinquished his rifle he allowed himself one more shot

— Mallew toppled over behind his stone, with a bullet through his throat.

As if that had been the signal, Tower yelled an order and his men plunged forward. In five seconds Harding and Yama had emptied their revolvers into the oncoming mass and grasped their cutlasses. With one accord they leaped to their feet, ready to dart upon the enemy in a forlorn hope. Twenty yards only separated the storming party from their goal.

At that instant a powerful figure jumped up on the low breastwork and hurled a long object full into the heart of the advancing force. Just then Harding felt something keen and cold slip into his chest and darken the world. A huge noise received him into its midst and he left the battle.

Hubbard's stick of dynamite ended the affair. His men rose from their places of shelter and stumbled out, rifles in hand, to look about them and wonder.

An enormous pit gaped across the Parade. To the deafened ears the stillness was vast and interminable. Not a groan nor a sigh broke the tranquillity of their hour of victory. Hubbard stood beside Jourjon on the edge of the rent in the pavement and stared down into it, oblivious of all about them. A wounded man crept slowly out of the little redoubt, rifle still in hand, like a boy stalking a rabbit. Here and there bodies lay, grimy and inert. The dynamite had done its work thoroughly. Far up the Parade the remnant of the mob was fleeing in wild disorder.

"A complete success!" said the judge presently in a voice that sounded most thin and strange to himself. "The schooner and its crew gone and

Tower's force utterly demolished. The mob has scuttled to its hole, of course."

Hubbard apparently did not hear. He glowered into the great crevasse, his squint magnified into absolute ferocity. Jourjon glanced at him. "What a true soldier!" he murmured. "What couldn't one accomplish with an army of such as he!"

Suddenly the crawling wounded man called out. Jourjon turned and walked over to where he lay by the roadside. His hand was extended and pointing to two figures, side by side in the shadow of the hedge. Harding lay as if asleep. Sergeant Yama, twisted on his back, was blinking at the sun, now high towards its zenith.

While the judge looked down on them Hubbard joined him. "So they were the boys that did the work!" he muttered. "And I really thought Harding had run away!"

Sergeant Yama rolled his eyes upon him.

"Misdah Harding ver-r-ry good man-dah!" he said hoarsely. "Yes-s-s, mis-dah! Ver-r-ry good-ah, sah!"

"Harding's still alive, too," the judge remarked, stooping over him. "Shot in the breast!"

He rolled the limp form over gently. Harding opened his eyes. "All right?" he murmured.

"Fine," said Hubbard, squinting kindly. "You're a bit shot up."

Harding raised himself on one elbow. "Listen to me," he said anxiously. "I'm badly hurt and I can't help you. But you must get every one of those men. Don't let one get away!"

"Mallew and Tower are beyond getting away,"

268 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

Jourjon said gently. "And how Mallew ever swam from the schooner, I don't know!"

The engineer smiled at his foreman. "Good job, Hubbard! I knew you could handle explosives! But the town must be all one fire! This smoke is suffocating and I can hardly see you."

Hubbard glanced at the judge. Jourjon shook his head slightly. Harding was dying. But he opened his eyes again presently to say again, "The fire?"

"Still burning," was the response. "But it will be easily controlled. The City Bureaux is gone." Hubbard could not help a grin. But Harding was unconscious again.

"I must get the doctor here," the judge snapped. "Atui's safe enough for the present. Harding, I suppose, must die, but we can save a lot of these faithful fellows."

A volunteer came up with the news that Dr. Maxwell was coming in a hack. He appeared directly, stooping over the scattered bodies with a serious and professional air. Over Harding he knelt a long time. When he arose he met the mute question in many eyes.

"I can't tell," he said. "Get a rig of some sort and take him to the Big House." Then he examined the Japanese hastily. Yama looked at him darkly. Maxwell shook his head. "You're knocked to bits. You're dying, my man."

At this moment a grotesque figure broke into their circle. Jourjon stared and then ejaculated, "The Rev. Mr. Harrow!"

It was the missionary, his clothing torn, his griz-

zled hair matted, his face scratched in a dozen places. He dripped salt water.

Hubbard slapped him joyously on the back. "I thought you were blown up with the schooner!" he shouted. "You were on the pier at the time!"

"I was thrown into the water," Harrow returned in his harsh voice. "I managed to climb up on the wreck. I was too weak to swim ashore till just now." He stared down at the dying policeman, caught Yama's glance and promptly knelt beside him and lifted his great hands in the attitude of prayer.

While the onlookers stood in silence Harrow's voice rose in pleading for the passing soul. The prayer ended, Harrow laid his hand on the wounded man's heaving chest. Yama opened his eyes and smiled, twisting his head so that he could have a final look at his unconscious chief.

"Misdah Harding ver-ry good man-dah!" he said painfully. "Good-ah man! Misdah! Sah!" and with this tribute died.

Hubbard drew a deep breath. "I'd like to know how it was that Percy Williams joined Tower," he growled. "The whole business is so mixed up that I don't know what to think."

Maxwell rubbed his chin reflectively. "My business is the most important now. Let's get these wounded men out of the sun."

"Harding first," Hubbard insisted. "I know where *he* stood, anyway."

"I will look after him," Harrow interposed. "I'll take him to the Big House."

"And I'll see what I can do in town," Jourjon said. "There is only one man that can straighten

out affairs now — Thomas Sanderson. Meanwhile I'll do what I can."

So it happened that the first authentic news of the outcome of the morning's battle was brought by Harrow when he accompanied the almost inanimate body of Harding to the Big House. Mrs. Sanderson met him at the door, saw his burden, and called her husband.

Half an hour afterwards the "King of Atui" spoke curtly to the doctor. "You must pull him through."

Maxwell looked puzzled. "Can I? The bullet damaged an important nerve centre and I'm afraid it will kill him."

Sanderson frowned. "You must save him," he said briefly.

"Of course I'll do my best," said the offended physician. "But he is very seriously wounded. His recovery — even his survival for the next few hours — depends entirely on how he sustains the shock. If I can keep him alive for thirty-six hours he will probably recover. He is of a strong constitution. But he should have taken more exercise. I told him so."

"Ask for anything you need," Sanderson growled. "Moir and my wife will help nurse him."

"There are others requiring my attention," Maxwell proceeded.

Sanderson waved the rest into oblivion. "Let 'em get well themselves," he said harshly. "They wanted this. They got it. Let 'em eat it." He went down the steps and entered the waiting hack.

"To the police station!" he ordered.

In the sitting-room Dr. Maxwell found Bertha Spinner. She was pale and trembling. "It is terrible!" she murmured.

"Have you a violet coloured gown?" the doctor asked with professional sternness. "Go and put it on and sit in subdued sunlight. That will soothe your nerves."

Maxwell nodded with satisfaction at the effect the mere suggestion had on his patient. She tripped away on her all important errand.

"A delicate organisation!" said the doctor to himself. "Highly strung! A wonderfully womanly and feminine girl! I must give her my constant care!"

CHAPTER XXIX

“WHY DIDN’T YOU TRUST HIM?”

THAT afternoon Moira stood dry-eyed and silent before the smoking ruins of the City Bureaux. A hundred labourers were busy cleaning up the Parade; and the police station a block below was a second busy scene, for Thomas Sanderson himself was in charge there, with Nathan Harrow at his elbow. Order was coming out of disorder, and the broad thoroughfare was filling for its entire length with people drawn from their shelters and hiding places by the news that the “King of Atui” ruled in person once more.

To Moira the scrape and clatter of shovels, chatter of sightseers and quick whisperings of the gossipers were of little concern. She was trying to realise that she had been the cause of this rebellion and the object of the people’s wrath. Her lofty ideals had won disdain and hatred. That she knew; though she could not acknowledge any reasonable basis for it. Since it was so, however, she was glad that her building, the temple of her ambitions, had been destroyed. It would have been mockery had the City Bureaux remained to be a monument to her irretrievable disaster.

Though no one openly slighted or insulted her, she felt that she was among an unfriendly crowd. Here

and there a familiar face was averted. Even John White, whom she had rescued from debt and misery, had stopped near her only to remark drily, "Well, that ends *that!*"

In all Atui was there one individual still loyal? She was compelled to admit that if there was one, he lay in a bare room in the Big House, dying; Maxwell had been hurriedly frank. "While he's alive there's hope, of course, but I see no chance."

Now that she knew somewhat of the history of the affair, given her in brief frigid sentences by her father, she realised that Harding had really, if mistakenly, been fighting for her safety and Atui's independence. Sanderson had been brutally explicit.

"You put the man out of his job and gave it to a fool. You allowed your whole government to be the plaything of a set of silly young folks. Naturally, the self-respecting citizens grew to hate your City Bureaux and were ready to take any risks to be rid of it and your parasites. Harding you put in jail out in the Valley for pure spite. He found out what was being done, saw that there was no hope of persuading you and your friends to be sensible, knew what Tower and Mallew would do and back-fired their revolution. You interfere at the wrong moment, release Williams and Springe, scatter the police force and upset Harding's plans. Result; Yama and a dozen other good men are dead, Harding is dying and you have only yourself to blame, my girl."

"Why didn't he come to me and tell me all this?" she demanded.

Her father's hard eyes had scorched her. "Why

274 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

didn't you trust him? Why did you insist on trusting Williams and Springe?"

The memory of their defection was the one insuperable fact that proclaimed her folly. She called all her cherished honesty to her aid to meet it fairly. Yes, Williams had abandoned her, left her unprotected to the lawless violence of a crazed and bloodthirsty mob. She owed her safety from outrage and probably from death to the hardihood and wisdom of the one man she could never willingly thank.

Standing in the bright sunshine under a cloudless sky with the noise of the Pacific surf in her ears, she tasted the bitterness of death. But her face was calm and her eyes were steady. She knew that she was soon going to quit forever this city of shameful memories. She would go as soon as Harding was dead. She owed it to him to suffer the agony of enduring Atui for a time. After all, he had loved her. He had told her so. He had proved it, though the fashion of his demonstration had been shameful to herself. But she could not love him in return, for there had been nothing personal in his self-sacrifice. Admiration was due the patriot. She reserved her heart for the lover, the gentle, kind and ever-thoughtful servant of her fancy. If Harding had thrown himself on her mercy, tossed aside every consideration but her own success and welfare, if he had been willing to throw Atui and its twelve thousand people into the abyss for her sake, *then* she could have gladly loved him!

A voice calling her first name made her turn around. Bertha Spinner was standing by her, much excited.

"Moira Sanderson! How *can* you look at those ruins and keep from crying! Wasn't it awful? I thought we would all be murdered in our houses!"

Moira called up her pride of honest speaking. "We would have been if it hadn't been for Mr. Harding."

"*Moira!* He was the head and front of the whole business! How can you even think of him, when brave Percy is dead and poor Dick is in jail! And did you hear how fiendishly he behaved to poor papa? He put *him* in jail. I'm glad he won't live to boast of it."

Moira felt powerless to resent this hysterical chatter. "Yes, he's dying," she murmured.

Bertha glanced pertly at her old friend's face and went on, "I know he *was* a friend of yours. But after what Dick told me —"

"What did he tell you?" Moira asked dully.

"Oh, well, I didn't mean to annoy you," Miss Spinner went on. "But Dick says Harding shot Percy in the back."

This was too much for Moira's strained nerves. Her face went deadly white. She barely saw Bertha's figure before her.

"It's a pity that Mr. Harding didn't kill him before he joined that mob," she said in an even, tuneless voice. "Mr. Williams and Mr. Springe tried to turn us all over to the tender mercies of those ruffians. You tell Dick Springe that if it is my last act on earth I'll expose him for what he is."

"No need, Miss Sanderson," said a heavy voice behind her. "We all know him."

Moira turned blindly to see who this unexpected

276 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

ally might be. She saw him but indistinctly and did not recognise Hubbard. She merely put out her hands childishly. "Will you help me home?" she whispered. "I can't see!"

Without a word the foreman caught her up gently into his arms and strode away for the police station.

Bertha Spinner, by no means bad or cruel at heart, was stricken with remorse. She had been offended by Moira's aloofness when she expected kindness, confidence and sympathy. She realised now that Moira was suffering profoundly.

"I do believe she never got over that Harding affair," she mused. "Anyway, Dick's an awful liar, and he probably lied about poor Percy being shot that way."

Indeed, Bertha's knowledge of what had taken place during the day was very slight. She had spent the morning at the Big House after being hurried thither by Dr. Maxwell, had seen Moira come home under Sanderson's escort in the forenoon, had witnessed the bringing in of Harding and then devoted herself for an hour to Maxwell's prescription of violet and sunshine. On arrival at her own home she had heard of her father's incarceration by Harding's orders and the news that over a hundred had been killed in the morning's battle. Dick Springe had spoken to her a minute, but his excitement was like intoxication and she was glad when a policeman came and took him away. It struck her as peculiar that her father was very mild in his description of his treatment by Harding. She could not know that Thomas Sanderson had enjoyed a five minutes' in-

terview with his chief trader, whose measure he had taken years before. But she was naturally loyal to her family and equally hostile to all who seemed opposed to her father or his friends.

She determined now that she would remain on the Parade and learn what further particulars she could. Half an hour later, after meeting some friends and exchanging experiences, she stopped with simulated astonishment near Springe, who was working under guard in the ruins of the City Bureaux. She caught his eye, stared as if she had never known him and passed on. Dick was erased from the list of her acquaintances.

Hubbard meanwhile had taken Moira into her father's office.

"What happened to her?" was Sanderson's question.

The foreman explained what he had overheard of the conversation with Miss Spinner. "I saw she was all in, so I brought her here," he ended.

"Right!" he glanced at his daughter's feverish eyes, now fixed on vacancy. He bent over her tenderly.

She recognised him. "Papa, I can't see very well. Dick Springe is saying that Harding shot Percy in the back."

A sardonic smile crept over Sanderson's face. "We'll settle Mr. Springe right away," he said and issued an order that the young man be ironed and set to work in the ruins as a public example. Then he sent Hubbard home with Moira and resumed the task of straightening out Atui.

That night Harding awoke from dark dreams to

278 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

see the face of Judge Jourjon, calm and dispassionate. The judge sat in his most judicial attitude, as though Death pleaded at his bar for a life. He smiled when he saw that Harding recognised him.

"I seem to be badly hurt," said the wounded man.

"I hope you will get well," Jourjon said simply.

Harding seemed to think this over. "It doesn't matter," he said presently.

The judge cleared his throat. "I am not a physician," he proceeded. "I will be frank: Dr. Maxwell has given you up. He says that the bullet through your lungs and some nervous shock caused by the dynamite explosion are fatal when combined. So much for the doctor. His practice has been largely among women. I have told you what I promised I would. It is considered proper to announce death to the dying.

"As for yourself, are you going to give up your career? Atui is yours, if you wish it. I know of nobody that can successfully govern it and reunite the factions except yourself. Sanderson and I are agreed on that."

Harding's eyes brightened. "That is the way to talk," he said in a stronger voice. "I feel as if I could recover — if it were best. But —"

Jourjon knew from his tone that his heart was sore, his inner self wounded. Being an observing and shrewd soul, he surmised the hand that had inflicted this injury. He rose. "I mustn't tire you. Think it over." He smiled pleasantly. "And please don't die before I can speak with you again."

"I shan't," was the smiling response.

On the porch, dimly lit by a solitary lantern, Jour-

Jon accosted Moira, who sat languidly in a long chair.

“I have spoken with him,” he said briskly. “He will get well — if he is encouraged. He is a soldier. I have been a soldier myself. We do not die while there is work for us to do. I informed him that Maxwell had given him up and that everybody except myself was sure he would not recover. He practically refuses to accede to the universal despair. A good beginning is half way. There is no medicine like good news. Still —” his sharp eyes watched the girl’s face — “he would probably oblige you if you wished him to die.”

She started up. “I!” she cried. “I wish him to die! After all he’s done?”

The judge picked up his light cane. “Tell him so. Maxwell is right in saying that he has suffered a dangerous nervous shock, which makes him require acute stimulus merely to keep on breathing. Naturally this physical lassitude has its mental counterpart. I was sure he was morbidly sensitive when he thought you cared nothing for his recovery. Remove the prejudice.”

She shook her head. “He must hate me!”

Jourjon looked concerned. “I wouldn’t let him go — feeling that way.”

She gazed at the elderly Frenchman with some wonder. “You are strange to-night! You speak as if death were so simple!”

“It is simple,” was the response. “A bullet, an hour of weakness and then — nothing? or something? Very simple, my dear friend, much simpler than living. I am talking as a man, of course. It

is characteristic of brave men to do things without a fuss; for example, to die. Harding is a brave man. Therefore be assured he will pass without disturbing you. But — is he not your best friend? Friends are rare, Miss Sanderson."

"Do you mean to say he might really get well?"

"Ah! who knows? I think he would try, if it would be a favour to you."

She sighed deeply. "I would go and persuade him to live — if such a thing were possible — but he would misunderstand me."

Jourjon smiled faintly. "May I take a liberty? After all, we are speaking on the edge of a grave. Let us be frank. Mr. Harding loves you?"

She frowned at him. He met her look calmly. She hesitated, tooth on lip. "He asked me to marry him," she confessed, with dignity.

"Ah! and then? Pardon me, dear friend, but I — I have an affection for the young man and I would save him — if I could."

"I don't love him," she murmured. "If I deceive him as to my real feelings just to make him get well, I should be false to us both. I like him and — and respect him — but I must live my own life, honestly. You can see how cruel such a deception would be. I *must* be honest about it!"

"And you could not even go up those stairs and smile at him, just to encourage him to live? Not even a word?"

"I couldn't do it honestly," she replied, almost inaudibly.

"Of course," the judge answered contemplatively. "Let him die his own death and you live your own

life. Excellent! Honesty is the best policy. An axiom. Fair words butter no parsnips. True. Let Harding die! The poultry come home to roost. Pass on, my good Harding! Sunshine follows the show-ers. Perish, brave Harding! A stitch in time saves nine. You are unravelled, my friend! It never rains but it pours. Forward, into eternity, Soldier! It is better to have loved and lost. Thou hast lost, my comrade! All is lost save honesty. Depart into the night, my Harding, that a lady may not speak falsely!”

This extraordinary outburst, delivered with little formal bows and in a perfectly cold voice, made Moira uncertain whether the judge had not gone insane. He bent over and kissed her hand. “Miss Sanderson, I profoundly honour your scruples. I feel sure my friend will recognise their validity and die like a gentleman. I have the regret to bid you farewell!”

François Jourjon tripped down the steps into the moonlit dusk, humming a tune. Moira stared at her fingers, wet with tears — not her own!

Once out of sight of the Big House the judge stopped, wiped his eyes and shook his stick at the bright stars, breaking into a chant of enormous oaths remembered from the days when he was a young and ardent officer of artillery.

Moira could not sit still under the uneasy sense that she had been in some way put in the wrong. She felt that she must explain her position to some one who would sympathise with her just horror of a deception. It was ridiculous to suppose that the wounded man's life hung on the thread of her own

attitude towards him. Such an idea was the falsest sentimentality, and she would not yield to it. Harding would be the last man to accept such a sacrifice.

She went into the house and found no one in the lower rooms. She remembered that her father and Dr. Maxwell were still in the city. She slowly made her way to the upper story, intending to see Mrs. Sanderson and sound her as to Harding's condition. She had to pass the sick room and at the half-open door she involuntarily stopped and looked in.

A candle burned on a low table by the bedside and in its dim light sat Mrs. Sanderson. She was talking in a low tone to the patient. Moira observed the quiet sadness on her face, a pretty face, framed in loose hair. She heard Harding's answer to some question:

"Only my father, who lives in New Jersey. Find the address among my papers."

"No one else?" Mrs. Sanderson asked with gentle insistence.

He moved his head on the pillow. "No one."

"No girl? No sweetheart?"

"No one that cares," Harding replied in an almost inaudible tone. "You see I was too busy to — to go courting and, anyhow, women don't like me. Never did! It's better that it was so, now."

Moira saw her stepmother's lip quiver. She said no more for a while. Then she remarked, "I'll write to your father myself."

Harding reached out his hand. She rose and bent over him. His question came clearly to the listening girl's ears: "How long does Maxwell say I'll last?"

"Not long," was her whispered reply. "He's coming back to-night to see you. So many are hurt, you know!"

"Ask him if he doesn't think a bright blue necktie or a yellow night-cap would have a beneficial effect," the wounded man said with fresh cheerfulness. "Good old Maxy!"

"You really mustn't talk any more," Mrs. Sanderson choked.

"Fiddlesticks! If my cake is going to be taken away from me I might as well eat it. I want to tell you something about the doctor. He's in love."

"With Moira?"

"No," he said a little crossly. "With Bertha Spinner. Maxwell confided to me that he was sure Miss Spinner needed to wear pale blue constantly; told me pale blue enhanced the natural spirituality of the wearer. What better symptom of the tender passion than that? Bertha will make him happy because she'll test his skill every hour of his life. Result: Maxy always busy and Bertha getting a new gown every week. Help the doctor out, there, will you? Ideal marriage!"

Mrs. Sanderson was weeping without concealment. She bent over and kissed him on the forehead.

In the doorway Moira stood aware of a queer pain in her heart. She longed to flee, but something bound her to the spot, made it impossible for her to miss one instant of this scene. She merely drew to one side to allow her step-mother to leave the room. Then she slowly walked in, past the bed's foot, and to the low chair by the table. In this she seated herself, her hands loosely in her lap, her eyes cast down.

How long she remained thus she could not have told, so wild and incoherent were her thoughts. She was aroused by the voice of the man on the bed.

"Miss Sanderson, you needn't stay here. I'm all right. The doctor will soon be here."

She shook her head. "I must justify myself," she explained. "I can't let you think me heartless. I feel sure you will understand my position. Frankness is best."

"Precisely," he answered in a faint voice.

"Judge Jourjon said some bitter things to me a while ago," she went on. "He told me you would — you might get well for my sake. You know you told me once that you — you cared for me."

"I told you I loved you," he said simply.

"Yes. People seem to suppose that you did what you did to-day because you loved me."

There was a long silence. Finally Harding coughed painfully. When the paroxysm was past and he had regained a little strength he murmured, "And you wish to deny that?"

"I wish you would tell the truth," she said firmly. "This is surely the last occasion on which we should be dishonest. The judge thinks you will get well if I assure you that — that I care for you. When I told him I couldn't deceive you in that way he was — he was detestably rude. I really feel ashamed of myself that I don't love you. But I don't. Nobody longs for your recovery as I do. But I mustn't buy it by a *lie*. That would be unworthy of us both. I have always tried to be honest with you. Surely no one ought to expect me to deceive you when — when

you are in this condition.— I should love to remember that I had always been honest with you!"

"I see," Harding answered very slowly. "I can't get well under false pretences?"

"That's partly it," she answered doubtfully. "Of course, you must get well if it's possible."

"If I die, it must be because I had to," he whispered huskily. "If I get well, you have had nothing to do with it. Right you are! So be it!"

"You mustn't feel that I'm not anxious for your recovery — after all you've done. I'm really more grateful than my words sound. And — I think it is only right that if you get well that I be your wife," she went on, her eyes cast down. "I don't love you, but I do owe you a great deal, and so I promise to marry you if you get well. I'll tell papa and the judge that. I can't say that I love you, but I'll marry you. I want to do what is right. You — you understand, don't you?"

His eyes met hers in a profound and intimate gaze. "My dear, I understand you completely. You have paid me the biggest compliment I ever received in my life. But there is something I must ask you. I know you will tell me the truth. Do you pity me?"

She rose, wringing her hands. "Pity you? My God! I envy you!" She hurried from the room, sobbing.

For a full ten minutes after she was gone Harding lay quiet. At the end of that period he reached out his hand to a bottle on the little table. A sniff of its contents assured him that it was brandy. By prodigious efforts he raised himself in the bed and drank

it all. Then he supported himself on bent elbow, waiting with puckered brows for the desired result. Gradually the lines in his forehead smoothed out. His eyes shone. Deep within him he felt a reviving flame.

Strength flowed back into his limbs. He got out of bed and proceeded to dress himself. He found it impossible to draw his shirt over his bandaged chest and put on instead a linen jacket. Thus equipped he made his way out of the half-open door into the darkened passage and thence down the stairs and to the porch. No one was there. He went down the steps and walked along the driveway to where a carriage stood. He climbed in, roused the driver and ordered him to drive to the police station.

During the short time that he lay back against the cushions he kept one thing before his mind: he must prove equal to his own resolve to die alone. Moira must never feel that Judge Jourjon was right, and that he would have fought death to the last ditch and been victor at last had she loved him. He knew that he was fast becoming light-headed, but he also knew that last disappearance would be attributed to the vagaries of fever and not to the determination to save Moira at all cost from the sacrifice she had proposed. He knew that her promise to marry him, though she could not love him, represented only her heart-broken endeavour to do what was considered the right thing, and that the only way to save her was to die. She had, unwittingly, made it impossible for him to live. But no one should see his exit nor hear his final cry for the woman he loved.

The lights of the police station blazed ahead of him. He stopped the carriage in the shadow where the driver could not recognise him, slipped out and turned hurriedly down a by-street towards the bay. There was darkness here and he welcomed it, for the temporary effect of the stimulant was passing.

He came to a halt on the slender beach. Wavering, hot-lipped, almost screaming from the pain in his chest, he held himself upright a moment and stared out and across the moonlit bay. He bent over to draw a long, sobbing breath. Then, lying where he fell, he passed into the world of dreams.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CANDLE BURNS LOW

AN hour after midnight they found him. Sanderson stood beside Maxwell and stared down at the pallid face and bloodless lips. "I wonder — I wonder whether —" he began.

Maxwell glanced up. "Delirium!" he snapped. "I didn't expect the fever to develop so quickly. Odd!"

"Get him to the police station," Sanderson replied shortly. "We'll keep him where one can always have an eye on him. And we must tell the women he is found."

"Miss Moira will be relieved," the doctor murmured.

They stretched him out on the couch in the inner office, and Maxwell shook his head in answer to Mrs. Sanderson's mute glance. "He's alive," he said. "But he can't be moved again."

"Is — will he be conscious again?" Moira whispered from a seat on the other side of the room.

"Hard to tell!" Maxwell returned, and spoke of nerves and arteries. "I shouldn't wonder. However, he probably used up most of his remaining strength in that delirious fit. Still, he might be conscious for a moment — at the last."

"Then I will stay," she said firmly.

Maxwell went over to her with all his professional authority of manner. "You *must* go home, Miss Sanderson. Absolutely nothing can be done. You are overwrought. You must rest. I'll prepare a sedative for you."

She rose impatiently and walked to the couch. "I have something to say to him," she said rapidly. "I must wait."

"Impossible!" the doctor fumed. "You will be ill!"

"It doesn't matter," she responded, glancing at her father. "I have something to say to him."

"Let her stay," Sanderson interposed briefly.

"I will stay with her," said his wife, removing her light veil. "We must fix that couch into a bed. He'll need careful nursing."

"I'll look after him myself," said Maxwell, much hurt, and not yet over the sting of Sanderson's comments on his former care for his patient.

Mrs. Sanderson smiled. "Of course! But we'll help you."

The unconscious man was gently lifted into an easier position, and Maxwell himself approved of the quick touches that transformed the forbidding office into an almost comfortable room. All done that could be done, Mrs. Sanderson sat down by her husband, who was resting in motionless silence after the long day's excitement and work. Moira took a seat near the couch.

Outside the city hummed as of old, though it was far towards morning. After the strain, it seemed that the Atuans felt a new freedom and were loath to leave the streets for their homes. Through the

290 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

netted windows of the station flowed the strong savour of renewed life and activity. Laughing groups strolled by, momentarily dropping their voices while they passed the grim walls of the jail. A few yards away the bright lights of a candy shop illumined little parties sitting round three-legged tables, while aproned waiters hurried to and fro with cool drinks and plates of sweets. Somewhere in the distance a band played rollicking native airs. Not far away a woman sang a love song in a clear and melodious contralto.

Moirā listened dreamily. All this had nothing to do with her. Her city was not the real Atui that throbbed with laughter and song; it was a city of dreams, that was vanishing. All that remained of it was a man breathing painfully on a couch and herself, ashamed and alone. Yet the bitterness was past.

She knew now that happiness, as she had sought it, was an illusion. The mere burning of the City Bureaux was nothing. The fact that no earthly power could restore the ideal was everything. Atui was cleaner, healthier, brighter; the Atuans were better fitted for the struggle of existence. That was all. She herself was the sacrifice. She had thought herself the master of a great moral movement. She had been the victim of an irrational political debacle.

In her depths of suffering she discovered that there was something higher and nobler than what she had striven for. She remembered her hour in Sorry Valley with the missionary, and his words came back to her like a message of lofty wisdom. He had proclaimed that she would fail and stoutly affirmed that

in her failure she would find the true source of happiness. Dimly at first, then with increasing clarity of vision she saw what he had meant. It was this: not to be mistress and ruler, not to have subjects and enforce on them her will; it was to be the servant of a great love, to be mastered by it, to live for it, die for it. And the eternal woman stirring within her heart inevitably identified this love and service with human passion, the ever-human longing to merge one's self with the common life. Her last cry to Harding, "I envy you!" had been true in a way she had not suspected. He had followed the path of duty and even in his failure he was triumphant. Dying, he carried a dignity that no success of hers could have rivalled. What had he not achieved in one brief day? He had won the loyalty of Atui, the respect of her grim father, the devotion of Maxwell, her own promise of marriage. How had he done this? How had he got for himself the ideal felicity she dreamed of only?

Then her thoughts reverted to her strangely extorted pledge to marry him if he recovered. At the moment she had thought that this was merely a sacrifice on her part, the payment of debt which seemed due him. But as she pondered it in the dimly lit room she was not sure that she had not wanted to make this surrender. How queer that reality had been so different from all her dreams of that hour when she should give her hand to the unknown hero! Instead of telling him that she loved him, she had denied it. She had promised the substance and withheld the spirit. Had it been honest, after all?

She was barely aware that the door had opened

and some one had entered. Heavy steps approached the couch. She glanced up. Nathan Harrow stood by the couch. She saw his austere gaze rest on Harding's flushed face. His gaunt figure was stiff and severe before the onset of death; he towered in the silent room like a messenger from the Beyond. Childlike, she touched the missionary's gnarled hand. He turned his deep-set eyes on her with an extraordinary gentleness, kindness, compassion. His fingers closed over hers. In response, as it were, to a mute appeal in her face, he bowed his head. His lips moved. Gradually his head went back till he seemed addressing Heaven face to face. But he prayed soundlessly, and she bent her head, listening with her heart's ear to the inarticulate confession of a profound and simple faith.

Suddenly the silence was broken. Harding spoke loudly.

"She mustn't suffer," he said. "She must never blame herself because she couldn't lie to me . . . poor Moira!"

Dr. Maxwell quietly interposed, shaking his head, finger to lip. "The delirium is back on him," he whispered.

The sick man went on, after a pause, opening his eyes and fixing them on some invisible auditor. "I must get well, if I can when it's so little use, just to show her that I didn't die because she couldn't tell me she cared . . . Maxy, I shall probably refuse to croak. Wrap me in a sky-blue sheet and tie up my heart in scarlet scarves. Science, my boy, ought to conquer death. But cuddle Moira up in soft sleepy leaves so that she won't suffer. She can't lie, Maxy."

His voice fell away to rise more strongly than ever. "Maxwell! open your medicine chest and get the one drug that can cure the disease of death — quickly! Ha! ha! you haven't got it. Nobody has it but Moira, and Moira won't lie . . . well, let it go . . . poor girl . . . always honest!"

In the silent interval Maxwell spoke gently to Moira. "Really, Miss Sanderson, you aren't needed here. He may ramble this way for some time. It's pure delirium."

She shook her head.

Presently Harding seemed to awaken fully. His eyes shone brightly, and he spoke with sharp authority. "Sergeant Yama, go back! What? A message for me? Tell them to wait, sergeant. I can't come now. I have to die first, sergeant . . ." His voice fell into an almost inarticulate whisper. Then there was silence.

The doctor brushed the dry lips gently with water and peered into the unseeing eyes. While he stooped over the dying man the words bubbled forth again, distinctly, "Sergeant! I'll go with you!"

It was Moira's firm hand that restrained the raving man from sitting up. For the moment Harding's face seemed lit by an expression of utter happiness. "Ah! Moira!" he whispered. He stretched out his arms. Then the look faded. He fell back. Mrs. Sanderson sobbed aloud.

Dr. Maxwell used his hypodermic needle and remained close by the couch. The dying man struggled to fill his lungs. Presently the stimulant took effect. He grew quieter and spoke again, in a low tone.

294 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"All right, sergeant. I see you've come to take me to Sorry Valley. Yes-s-s! Misdah! Sah! Good old Jap!—Well, this ends it." Harding's voice dropped, his eyelids fluttered. Then he said with absolute simplicity, "Good-bye!"

Moira leaped to her feet. "Not yet!" she cried. "Not yet!"

She slipped to his side like a swift shadow, and knelt and swept her hands out to Harding's cheeks. "Come back, Harry! Come back! I love you! I *do* love you!"

The dying man heard that cry on the borderland. His brows wrinkled with some sudden tensing of his physical frame. His lips closed firmly. Moira's hands pleaded quiveringly on his face. Maxwell stared down, his hypodermic needle idle between his fingers, as he realised the inefficacy of a drug when soul called to soul.

Gradually, very gradually, a faint colour returned to Harding's forehead. His brow cleared, as if he understood at last. His right hand groped over the coverlet and Moira put her hand into it. He sighed contentedly.

Dr. Maxwell threw down the useless needle and bent over Moira. "If you will leave him to me I'll pull him through now," he said earnestly. "He is safe for the present."

She rose, a new expression on her face. "Give him back to me!" she pleaded. "I *love* him!"

"You've won him yourself," the doctor said quietly. "His fever is broken. The shock is over, now."

Thomas Sanderson lifted his grey head and looked

at his wife. She nodded to him in perfect understanding. "No more experiments," he said gently. "The real thing at last!"

Moirra came over to him. "Papa, take mamma home. You're both worn out. I'll stay here with Dr. Maxwell."

Sanderson got up stiffly. "All right, daughter. Jourjon is in charge outside. He and Mr. Harrow will look after you. Come, Mrs. S.!"

A moment later they were gone, and Judge Jourjon entered, bareheaded but still clad in his ancient uniform, cutlass at his hip. His eyes beamed on Moirra. He took her hand and kissed it gently. She felt a hot tear fall on her fingers. Then he bowed and was withdrawing. She stopped him with a whispered word. He waited, his hand on his sword hilt.

"I didn't lie to him," she said proudly. "It is true!"

CHAPTER XXXI

"BY WAY OF MR. HARROW'S"

WITHIN a week Maxwell pronounced Harding out of danger, though extremely weak. Immediately Moira, stricken with modesty, retired from the sick room and left it to her step-mother and a nurse. Under their care the engineer steadily improved. At the end of a month he was allowed to leave his bed and three days later he left the Big House for his own.

There he spent two days quietly gaining strength and planning the future. Jourjon visited him and went away shaking his head. He sought Sanderson and explained to him that Harding seemed to have lost all interest in affairs. "The boy ought to be asking for work to do," he said savagely, "and instead of that he merely stares out of the window and fusses with pencil and paper."

"I'm just waiting till he's strong enough before handing Atui over to him," Sanderson replied. "I've worked hard enough, as it is. Moira won't touch a thing connected with the town, you're busy as you can be and there only remains Harding. What's the matter with the fellow? What more does he want?"

Jourjon puffed vigorously at his cigarette. "Did you tell him your plan?"

"I left it for Moira to do," was the reply. "I thought she'd enjoy it."

"Better see him yourself," the judge fumed.

So Thomas Sanderson betook him in the sunny afternoon to the little house Harding occupied beyond the ruins of the City Bureaux. He was received cordially but when he broached the topic of Atui and its future government, Harding promptly shook his head.

"It is impossible for me to consider your offer," he said.

"I told Moira to tell you," Sanderson remarked, somewhat irritated at the young man's manner of receiving a favour.

Harding flushed through his pallor. "She told me, but I definitely cannot, accept," he said firmly. The old man found his arguments useless and left, strongly vexed.

When Harding announced that he intended to go to Australia on the next vessel, Sanderson and Jourjon looked at each other.

"I told Moira about it," her father explained. "The girl simply didn't have a word to say. I asked if she knew of any reason why he should act so queerly and she didn't seem to think of any."

Jourjon paced the office. "Think of it!" he ejaculated. "A wife that any man could envy him, an island and the most brilliant prospects. And I know he loves the girl, too."

"You're evidently mistaken," was the dry response. "He hasn't been near the house since he left."

Jourjon fixed bright eyes on his companion. "I

298 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

wonder —" he began, then nodded briskly and departed.

He found Harding in the midst of packing and instantly opened fire. "My friend, you are staining your honour as a gentleman by this conduct."

The engineer stared and then laughed faintly. "You are mistaken, judge."

"I am not," was the tart response. "It is publicly understood that you are betrothed to Miss Sanderson."

"It was a mistake," Harding explained slowly. "She made the promise under compulsion, when she thought that I was dying."

"Stuff!" was the wrathful reply.

"Look here," Harding interposed, "I know you mean well. All I can tell you is that I paid my addresses to Miss Sanderson and she distinctly informed me that she did not — care for me. I understood at the time her position and I sincerely beg you to believe me. I would save her any pain and the least I can do is to release her from a pledge given in mercy, not in love."

The judge considered this, turned on his heel and walked out. Harding called after him, for he knew Jourjon's friendship to be no light matter. But his appeal was in vain.

Moira received the judge with a wan smile. He refused her invitation to sit down and stood before her in his most judicial attitude. "Miss Moira, you told me that early morning in the police station that you loved Harry Harding. I recall perfectly your words. I find the man I loved as a gentleman and

a friend apparently under the impression that those words were false. He is going away."

She grew suddenly very pale.

"May I ask whether Harding is right in saying that you merely deceived him for his own sake?"

The colour flooded over her face. "I can't answer your question," she said in an almost inaudible voice. "I am sure that Mr. Harding is doing what he thinks right."

The judge's face expressed despair. "I beg your pardon for treading on such delicate ground," he stammered. "I respect your silence, and most of all I respect the sacrifice you made. It was nobly done! I wish —" He stopped, looked at her with wet eyes and left her.

Moira was confronting the most difficult situation in her experience. Three facts stood out distinctly, yet would not be reconciled. She had promised Harding to marry him and at the same time she had expressly stated that she did not love him. Later she found out that she did love him, and had allowed others to know it. Harding had avowed his love for her before he was given up for dying, but since his recovery he had said nothing at all to indicate that he even remembered either her promise or his own suit for her hand. What had happened?

This horrible puzzle she had tried vainly to solve by herself. It seemed as if the eternal round of hope, shame and fear would never cease; hope that he would come again and tell her of his passion, shame that she had confessed her own before witnesses, dread that he had ceased to care for her.

300 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

The judge's abrupt speech and evident emotion was the final stress on overwrought nerves, and she sat down on the porch of the Big House after he was gone and wept silently. She heard her step-mother stirring within and in utter terror of having to explain or confess the cause of her tears she got up and fled down the steps.

Below, in the shade of the trees, stood her carriage. She picked up a veil that lay on the seat, got in and directed the driver to take her to Sorry Valley. That place was now deserted and she felt that in its solitary environs she might have opportunity to regain control of herself and achieve some peace of mind.

She left the carriage at the entrance and directed the driver to return at sundown. Then she walked up the deserted road towards the falls. When she reached the little house by the pool where Harding had once lain asleep, she took off her wet veil and sat down on the steps to give free vent to her grief.

She was not in solitude, as she had thought. In the open doorway behind her stood Harding, a package of papers under his arm. He had walked to the Valley to procure some plates and maps he had left there the morning of the battle and, having got them, he was standing for a last look at the scene at once dear and sorrowful. He had not recognised the figure that slipped up the road and found a resting place on the porch. But he saw that it was a woman, evidently suffering profoundly.

So he withdrew a little, in pity, and debated how he could get away without intruding on grief meant to be solitary. But when the unknown woman rose

in an access of agony and he saw that it was Moira Sanderson, his heart went out to her in an overwhelming flood of tenderness. Without an instant's hesitation he strode out and called, "Moira! *Moira!*"

She turned her tear-stained face to him in bewilderment, answered his cry with an irrepressible sob.

The recollection of their peculiar relation hushed the words on his lips, and he suddenly realised that anything he might say would only aggravate her sorrow. So he stood silent, mastering himself by main will. But as her form continued to be shaken by sobs and he saw her piteous attempts to control herself, all considerations apart from the single thought that the woman he loved suffered before his eyes were brushed away and he caught her in his arms. To his delighted amazement she dropped her head on his breast. He held her close, hardly daring to breathe lest the spell be broken.

As she became more quiet he ventured a word. "Dearest girl!"

She suddenly lifted her face to his and he kissed her. Her lips told him all he needed to know.

They sat on the little porch careless of approaching dusk, and Moira faltered out the story of her perplexity and grief. When she mentioned the scene in the police station, he fell silent a while, holding her fingers in his firm grasp.

"I thought it was all a dream," he said presently. "You know I had so many dreams and all I could remember distinctly was that you had told me you didn't love me but you would marry me as a reward of merit. *That's* why I packed up and was going away, Moira dear."

302 THE PRINCESS OF SORRY VALLEY

"And I thought you *must* know!" she breathed.

"And I insulted poor Jourjon this afternoon," Harding remarked. "He was so angry he wouldn't even say good-bye to me. So I thought I'd come to Sorry Valley and—"

"That's why *I* came," she murmured. "The judge was up to see me and made me cry and I ran away."

"Good old judge!" said Harding heartily. "We must tell him right away."

"You must tell him," was her soft whisper. "Remember I told him once."

The coachman surveyed his mistress impassively when she came out of the Valley on the arm of the man he recognised as the former chief of police.

"Home!" said Moira.

The native peered down respectfully, "Big House, Miss, or Red House?"

"I'd forgotten I had a home of my own," Moira laughed.

"To the Red House," said Harding authoritatively. "Drive by way of Mr. Harrow's."

"Mr. Harrow's?" Moira inquired gently.

"We're going to be married to-night," was the reply. "We'll take Harrow along and telephone for the rest of 'em."

The girl by his side made protests such as have been softly whispered for ages, but to no avail. "And to-morrow," quoth Harding, "we'll start a new City Bureaux."

"But no Sorry Valley," she murmured.

"No, no Sorry Valley, any more, so long as we both shall live," he answered gently.



